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Comptroller Jack Schnirman Provides Tips to Prevent Tax-Return Fraud

Residents should be informed and prepared after breach of major credit reporting agency

MINEOLA, NY – Nassau County Comptroller Jack Schnirman today urged residents to remember to secure their W-2 forms and file their tax returns as soon as possible to help prevent instances of tax-related identity theft and tax-return fraud.

“Tax returns are a major target for identity thieves, and last year’s breach of a major credit reporting agency means all residents need to be aware of the potential risks,” Schnirman said. “While there is no foolproof way to prevent someone from attempting to file a fraudulent tax return, there are steps everyone can take to lessen their risk of being a victim of fraud.”

If an identity thief has your social security number, they can attempt to file a tax return in your name. Securing your W-2 form and filing your taxes as soon as possible reduces the risk someone else will use your information to file a fraudulent return in your name before you do.

If you have not received your W-2 form by the middle of February, contact your employer to ensure it was sent and that they have the correct address for you on file. If you are still having difficulties getting your W-2 forms, contact the IRS at 800-829-1040. The Office of the Nassau County Comptroller is exploring ways to modernize and streamline its own W-2 distribution process. The office is responsible for generating and distributing more than 14,500 W-2 forms to current and former employees annually. Federal law requires all employers to send out W-2 forms by January 31.

In order to guard against fraud, you should regularly check your credit reports, bank and credit card statements, and Social Security earnings statement to identify irregularities or suspicious activity.

According to the IRS, warning signs of tax-related identity theft include:

- More than one tax return filed in your name.
- You owe additional tax, have a refund offset, or have had collection actions taken against you for a year you did not file a tax return.
- IRS records indicate you received wages or other income from an employer for whom you did not work.

If you believe you have been a victim of identity theft, you should place a fraud alert with one of the three major credit reporting bureaus and file a report with the Federal Trade Commission at <https://www.identitytheft.gov/>. You should also file a report with your local police department.