



IRS SCAMS CONTINUE TO INCREASE

Hercules Police continues to receive several calls a day from residents indicating they had received a call from the "IRS" threatening them with arrest, outrageous fines and other penalties unless residents immediately obtain pre-paid credit cards and furnish the card account numbers to the "IRS" agents. The scammers usually tell the residents they owe about \$4,000.00.

Nationally, federal authorities say it's the largest IRS impersonation scam they've ever seen -- swindling victims out of more than \$15 million since it began in 2013.

"They have information that only the Internal Revenue Service would know about you," said Timothy Camus, deputy inspector general for investigations with the Treasury Department. "

Using identity theft technology, the thieves have successfully victimized more than 3,000 people in the past two years, although the Treasury Department cautions that number is only documented cases and the true number might be higher. More than 366,000 reports of contact with the scammers, and it's increasing at a rate of 10,000 to 12,000 a week.

Authorities believe the thieves are operating out of India, using phishing technology to make it appear they're IRS agents in Washington.

The Federal Trade Commission, which goes after scammers like these from a civil standpoint, and the Treasury Department, which leads the criminal probe, both have open investigations. The largest loss reported was a staggering \$500,000.

The thieves are incredibly smart and convincing. They harness stolen identities and use programs such as Google Earth to identify locations where their victims can transfer money.

Camus said many people are afraid when they hear from the IRS, so they do whatever the caller says.

How to get help: If you think you have been a victim of an IRS impersonation scam, you can report it to TIGTA's [web site](#) or call 800-366-4484.