

Here's how to tell between a genuine CRA phone call and a scammer

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Your phone rings, you answer it and the person on the other end of line claims that they're with the Canada Revenue Agency and they're calling to discuss your account. Do you hang up or hear them out?

It's a quandary that's on the minds of many Canadians following a rash of scam calls that have swindled 4,000 taxpayers out of some \$15 million, according to the RCMP.

The scammers, who often call from clandestine call centres in India, typically operate by telling their victims that they owe back taxes and should pay up immediately if they want to avoid serious consequences including imprisonment.

So ubiquitous are these scam attempts that legitimate CRA agents are finding it increasingly difficult to reach scam-wary Canadians who hang up on them and refuse to return their calls.

In a bid to help Canadians differentiate cheaters from credible callers, the CRA has now published a checklist outlining the reasons for which it may contact you, as well as red flags pointing to a scam call.

Reasons why the CRA may contact you by phone

- To verify your identity by asking for personal information such as your name, date of birth, address, account or social insurance number
- To ask for details about your account
- To initiate an audit process

Things the CRA will never do on the phone

- Use aggressive language or threaten to arrest you
- Leave threatening voicemails
- Demand immediate payment by Interac e-transfer, bitcoin, prepaid credit cards and gift cards from the likes of iTunes and Amazon.
- Ask for information about your passport, health card or driver's license

The CRA does indeed call Canadians who owe tax to the government. But they don't use aggressive language or threaten to throw you in jail if you don't pay up ASAP in bitcoin or iTunes

gift cards.

“A collections officer may call you to discuss your file and ask you to make a payment. In this case, you may need to provide some information about your household financial situation,” the CRA says.

An officer may also call you if you didn’t file your income tax or benefit return or if authorities want to follow up on your tax and benefit documents.

Small businesses and self-employed individuals can also expect phone calls from the CRA offering free Liaison Officer services to help them understand their tax obligations.

Canadians have the right to ask CRA agents for their name, phone number and office location and tell agents that they’d like to verify their identity before proceeding with the call.

If you’ve already completed a call and want some extra peace of mind, you can find out if the person who called you works for the CRA by calling 1-800-959-8281 (for individuals), 1-800-959-5525 (for businesses) and 1-866-864-5823 (for calls related to student loans and employment insurance).

While much of the attention surrounding tax scams centres around phone calls, scams can also be perpetrated via other forms of communication.

To see the CRA’s complete set of tips on identifying genuine phone calls, emails, mails and text messages — as well as tell-tale signs of scammer contact — [click here](#).

If you detect a scam attempt, you can report it by calling 1-888-495-8501 or online at www.antifraudcentre.ca. If you think you’ve been the victim of a scam, contact your local police service, your bank and credit reporting agencies

<https://wsaccounting.ca/index.php/news/30-here-s-how-to-tell-between-a-genuine-cra-phone-call-and-a-scammer?download=1&id=30&print=0>