

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF
THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
on
The IRS Agent Impersonation Scam
Before the**

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charged with failing to provide reasonable and appropriate protections for consumers' personal information, or misrepresenting the protections they provide.⁴ The FTC has also acted aggressively on two other key fronts – nationwide complaint management and consumer

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B. Consumer Education and Business Guidance

Consumer education and outreach is another important part of the Commission's mission. The Commission works to empower consumers by providing them with the knowledge and tools to protect themselves from identity theft and to deal with the consequences when it does occur. The Commission receives on average 37,000 consumer contacts each week through its toll-free hotline and dedicated website, of which approximately 6,300 are identity theft complaints. Both

distributed more than 5.4 million copies of the recovery guide and has recorded more than 4.3 million visits to the Web version (both English and Spanish versions).

The Commission also sponsors OnGuard Online,¹¹ a website designed to educate consumers about computer security, including the importance of not disclosing personal information such as Social Security numbers (“SSNs”) to possible fraudulent operators. OnGuard Online was developed in partnership with other government agencies and technology companies. Visitors to the site can download educational games and videos, learn more about specific topics, including phishing and social networking, and obtain useful tips and information in an interactive format. OnGuard Online and its Spanish-language counterpart, Alerta en --

The Commission directs its outreach to businesses as well, encouraging them to secure consumers' information so that it does not fall into the hands of identity thieves in the first place. The FTC widely disseminates a business guide on data security¹⁵ and has developed both an online tutorial¹⁶ and a blog post¹⁷ based on the guide. These resources are designed to provide diverse businesses – and especially small businesses – with practical, concrete advice as they develop data security programs and plans for their companies.

coming weeks, the FTC will unveil a new IdentityTheft.gov to provide streamlined information for identity theft victims and people whose information is stolen. In later phases, the Commission will enhance the online victim assistance process to help people take steps online to

While identity theft is an equal opportunity crime affecting all age groups, tax identity theft impacts older Americans in particular. First, older Americans often share their personal identifying information – including SSNs – with a wide range of family members and service providers, including lawyers, accountants, financial advisors, and health care professionals. At the same time, they often have a lifetime of accumulated assets that make them attractive targets

and social media.³² Last year, the Commission partnered with the IRS and AARP to focus on the top ten states for tax identity theft, hosting events in each state.³³ Finally, the FTC has developed consumer guidance on both identifying and dealing with tax-related identity theft.³⁴

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