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As the deadline looms for filing your taxes, there is a heightened identity theft risk, with many tax schemes designed to steal identity information, tax refunds, and more.

One alert from the IRS that you should be aware of is a recent problem with fraudulent websites that impersonate the actual IRS site: “The IRS warns consumers about a new tax scam that uses a website that mimics the IRS e-Services online registration page. The actual IRS e-Services page offers web-based products for tax preparers, not the general public. The phony web page looks almost identical to the real one. The IRS gets many reports of fake websites like this. Criminals use these sites to lure people into providing personal and financial information that may be used to steal the victim’s money or identity. The address of the official IRS website is www.irs.gov. Don’t be misled by sites claiming to be the IRS but ending in .com, .net, .org or other designations instead of .gov.”

Tips to protect yourself:

• Always connect directly with the IRS through their known web address www.irs.gov.

• Be cautious of any emails you receive that appear to be from the IRS. The IRS will never contact you by email, text message or social media requesting personal information.

• If you do receive a suspicious email or come across a website that appears to be mimicking the IRS site report it to the IRS immediate by email phishing@irs.gov.

If we all keep our eyes open for suspicious sites and do our part to report them, we can help to

reduce the risk of id theft and keep others safe.