

Netsafe Warns of Tax Refund Scam Surge

Thursday, 4 June 2026

Netsafe is warning New Zealanders to be on high alert after reports of tax refund scams increased by 44 percent in May compared with April.[1]

The online safety organisation says scammers are exploiting key dates in the tax calendar, particularly between May and July when many individuals are expecting tax refunds. Similar spikes were also recorded around the end of the financial year in March and April.

Netsafe Digital Harm Services Manager Alex Yi says scammers commonly impersonate Inland Revenue (IRD), and in some cases Police, to trick people into handing over sensitive personal and banking information.

"Scammers may contact you by email, text message or phone call claiming you're entitled to a tax refund and need to provide your banking details to receive it," says Yi.

"Others may claim you owe money to Inland Revenue and must pay immediately or face action from Police. Their goal is to pressure people into providing information that can be used to steal money or commit identity fraud."

Yi says tax refund scams can be particularly difficult to identify because victims often do not realise they have been targeted until weeks or months later.

"What's most concerning is that these scams can appear legitimate. People may not realise anything is wrong until the refund they're expecting never arrives or they discover their personal information has been misused."

"The time between the scam occurring and being detected gives criminals an opportunity to exploit highly sensitive personal information, increasing the risk of identity theft and other forms of harm."

This year Netsafe has already received numerous reports of financial losses linked to tax refund scams.

"While financial losses are concerning, the greater risk is often the amount of personal information victims willingly provide. Once scammers have access to identity information, the impacts can be long-lasting."

With the income tax return filing deadline approaching in July, Netsafe is encouraging New Zealanders to take extra care when responding to communications about tax refunds or payments.

How to protect yourself

Avoid clicking links

Do not click links in emails or text messages claiming you need to claim a refund, make a payment or verify your details. Instead, log in directly to your myIR account through the official IRD website.

Check email addresses

If you receive an email claiming to be from IRD, ensure the sender's address ends in @ird.govt.nz. IRD will never include the amount of your refund in an email.

Be cautious of text messages

IRD sends text messages using four-digit short codes, not standard mobile phone numbers.

Question unexpected phone calls

If someone calls claiming there is an investigation into unpaid taxes, do not provide banking information or log into online banking while on the call. IRD does not use threatening language or threaten arrest over the phone. If unsure, ask for the caller's details, hang up and contact IRD directly on 0800 775 247.

Never pay with gift cards

IRD will never request payment through prepaid credit cards or gift cards such as iTunes cards.

Verify directly with IRD

Visit the IRD website for information about current tax scams and examples of fraudulent emails and text messages.

If you've been targeted

- Contact your bank immediately if you have shared bank account or payment card details.
- Contact IDCare for free support if you are concerned about identity theft.
- If you have shared your driver's licence details, arrange a replacement through NZTA.
- Report scam emails, calls and text messages to IRD by forwarding emails or sending details to phishing@ird.govt.nz.

Anyone who believes they may have been targeted by a scam can contact Netsafe for free and confidential support.

Report to Netsafe

If you need assistance or support Netsafe has got you covered.

Contact us by completing an online report form, emailing us on help@netsafe.org.nz or texting on 4282.

Our helpline is open from 9am – 6pm weekdays.
Our free number is 0508 638 723.

About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent, non-profit organisation that provides free advice and support to people across Aotearoa New Zealand on online safety issues, including scams, harassment, and harmful digital communications. Netsafe is the Approved Agency under the Harmful Digital Communications Act.

[1] In April 2026 there were 18 reports of tax refund scams, and in May 2026 there were 26 reports.