

Telephone Security Procedures

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Does not reflect current Revenue position.
Most recent version of this manual.

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1. Introduction

All personal data/information held by Revenue on taxpayers is confidential. Some of the personal data/information (e.g., income details, tax payments, etc.) is very sensitive and would be of interest to unauthorised persons for various reasons (e.g., media value, for competitive advantage, use by sinister elements, curiosity value, litigation, marital breakdown, etc).

It can happen that unauthorised persons phone Revenue offices looking for information on particular taxpayers under false pretences such as pretending to be the taxpayer, an agent, an officer from another area of Revenue, from the Department of Protection or another Government Department.

Therefore, when dealing with telephone callers, including relatives of the taxpayer, care needs to be exercised to ensure that breaches of confidentiality/security do not occur. On the other hand, we must conduct business on the telephone with our customers and those acting on their behalf. These guidelines should not be interpreted as placing any restriction on telephone business or the customer service provided for taxpayers. "Bogus" calls are not an everyday occurrence, and most officers may never encounter them. The aim of these guidelines is to ensure that accidental breaches of taxpayer confidentiality/security do not occur when dealing with telephone callers.

It is Revenue policy that officials provide their full name when requested by a caller. There is an exemption to releasing the full name in very limited circumstances, i.e., if there are grounds for concern with regard to the safety or security of staff due to the behaviour of the caller. If this is the case, caseworkers should provide the unique staff number assigned to provide the customer with an identifier.

These guidelines are to be applied only to requests for specific personal information, and requests for amendments, where it is necessary to establish the bona fides of the taxpayer or someone acting on his/her behalf. They do not apply to requests for general (non-personal) tax information which should be provided without restriction.

2. Exercise Vigilance

The best protection is to be vigilant. The type of calls to watch for are the calls that raise a question in your mind (e.g., "why does the caller want to know that" or "surely the caller should know that" or "that's an odd request"). Genuine callers will not be looking for information that you would expect them to have already. As regards third party callers, ask yourself would it be normal for such a caller to be looking for such information regarding the particular taxpayer?

3. Call Recording

3.1 Calls Recorded by Revenue

Revenue records calls on all call centre and helpdesk telephone services. Call recording of all calls, both inbound and outbound, relating to certain business financial transactions, on certain designated services, is a mandatory requirement.

The following material is either exempt from or not required to be published under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

[...]

3.2 Calls Recorded by the Customer

If you have a suspicion that your call is being recorded by the caller without them informing you, you should:

- Ask the caller if they are recording the conversation,
- Where advised yes, tell the caller that they have not been given permission to record the call, and
- Advise the caller to make their request to record the call in writing.

Where the telephone operator still has concerns that the call is being recorded, the telephone operator may advise the caller that they will terminate the call, referring the caller to the Customer Service Charter on www.revenue.ie. In the event of a call being terminated, the officer concerned should advise their immediate line manager of the incident, providing as much caller identity information as possible.

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Accountant General's & Strategic Planning Division

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