

TAX SEASON EDITION

Don't let your W-2 go down the drain

January is when payroll and HR inboxes get emails that look like they're from the superintendent, asking for every employee's W-2. One reply can hand crooks the names, Social Security numbers and salaries of an entire district.



1

Two people, one phone call

Any request for W-2s, pay stubs or an employee list gets a phone call to a known number and a second person's OK before anything is sent. Make it the payroll office rule, no exceptions for big titles.



2

Check the address, not just the name

Display names are easy to fake. Tap the sender to see the real address, and watch for a reply-to that points outside the district or to a personal account.



3

Report it even if nobody bit

Send the email to your help desk. The IRS also collects W-2 scam emails: save the email as a file and attach it to a message to phishing@irs.gov with the subject 'W2 Scam'.



Spot the scam



Email

External

Dr. Elaine Porter, Superintendent <superintendent.office@dist-k12-admin.example>

Quick request - confidential

Good morning. I need last year's W-2s for all staff as PDFs for a board audit review. Please send them to me directly today. I'm out of the office and only on email this week. Do not loop in the business office, since they are part of the review. Thank you for your discretion. Dr. Porter. Sent from my phone

Spot the scam: how many red flags can you find?

Red flags I found: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Look for: surprise, urgency, secrecy, an unusual payment method, a sender or link you can't confirm.

FUN FACT

The IRS wants to see W-2 scam emails even when nobody fell for them. A plain forward drops the hidden header details, so the IRS asks you to save the email as a file and attach it.

Source: IRS: Form W-2/SSN Data Theft: Information for Businesses and Payroll Service Providers



Your 60-second move

Payroll and HR: agree today that no W-2 request gets answered without a call to a known number. Everyone else: confirm your mailing address with HR.



Who do I tell?

Name / ext. _____

Report channel _____

ANSWER

Five flags: everyone's W-2s, a fishy 'audit' reason, a same-day deadline, a boss who can only email, and orders to skip the business office. Safe move: don't reply. Call the superintendent's office at the directory number, tell your payroll lead and report the email.

- A request for every employee's W-2 is the jackpot for identity thieves.
- An audit excuse that doesn't match how audits really work.
- A same-day deadline.
- A leader you can't reach by phone or in person.
- Cutting out the business office removes your safety check.



Scan for a 2-minute lesson on W-2 and tax-season scams

Free, no sign-in · k12cyberforward.com/learn