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IRS to Hide Workers' Identities From Taxpayers

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Updated: May 16, 2023

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The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on May 11 said it will start limiting workers' personal identification information on communications with taxpayers in June to reduce threats aimed at IRS employees.

The Treasury Department's inspector general for tax administration said in a May 8 report ([pdf](#)) that it was "concerned that taxpayers and anti-government or anti-tax groups with malevolent intent may use the Internet or social media to track down and identify IRS employees, their families, their homes, and personal information to threaten, intimidate, or locate them for physical violence."

The report noted that 34 percent or 11 of 32 IRS

managers whose full name and office telephone number appeared on manual correspondence were contacted by taxpayers outside of normal business methods, such as through their personal telephone lines or social media. However, none reported being threatened because of these contacts.

The IRS said it will remove workers' first names from communications, leaving their last names and respective Mr., Ms., or a gender-neutral title. Phone numbers will still be included in communications.

The decision comes as the agency has received increased attention after the climate, health care, and tax legislation signed into law by President Joe Biden last year included \$80 billion in funding for tax collection efforts.

In August, IRS leadership announced that it would conduct a comprehensive review of the safety at its 600 facilities nationwide.

“For me, this is personal. I’ll continue to make every effort to dispel any lingering misperceptions about our work,” then-Commissioner Chuck Rettig said in a letter to workers.

Under the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, contact information for IRS employees must be included in manually generated correspondence. That includes the worker's name and phone number.

Kenneth Corbin, commissioner of the IRS' wage and investment division, said in a letter to the inspector general's office that "we will take steps to limit the amount of personally identifiable information of our employees provided on manually generate correspondence while remaining compliant" with the law.

Separately, new IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel confirmed during an April 27 hearing of the House Ways and Means Committee that the IRS Criminal Investigations (IRS-CI) unit plans to hire additional staff authorized to carry guns.

Werfel was responding to Rep. Adrian Smith's (R-Neb.) question about whether an estimated 360 new armed agents would be hired per year over the next five years for a net gain of 1,200 after attrition due to resignation and retirement.

The IRS replied that Smith's estimate sounds "about

right,” though he added that they would not be used to increase the number of tax audits.

IRS-CI unit represents 3 percent of the agency’s workforce and employed roughly 2,077 special agents as of the 2022 budget year, according to the IRS’ annual report.

“Our CI division or Criminal Investigation Division, they do not conduct audits,” Werfel said. “What they do is, they are investigating acute issues of fraud and tax evasion. And typically, they’re armed when they’re putting themselves in danger.”

The IRS-CI examines potential criminal activity related to tax crimes and makes recommendations for prosecution to the tax division of the Justice Department.

Republicans have warned that the IRS’s \$80 billion cash infusion would be used to hire an “army of 87,000” tax enforcers.

The 87,000 figure comes from a 2021 Treasury Department report that estimated that the IRS could hire 86,852 full-time employees over a decade if it received an \$80 billion funding boost.

The Associated Press and Tom Ozimek contributed to this report.