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Identity theft is a threat at any time of the year but becomes even more so during tax season. While I hope you never need them, now is the time to familiarize yourself with available resources in case you, or someone you know, becomes an identity theft victim.

I've written about this issue most recently in a November 18, 2015 blog describing the IRS' new process by which identity theft victims can get a copy of a tax return filed fraudulently [using the victim's Social Security number and name](#)

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Now there are even more tools available for identity theft victims thanks to the efforts of another federal agency.

On January 28th, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) announced its latest and improved tool --- a "one-stop website" ---for assisting victims of identity theft. This news was announced by FTC Chairwoman Edith Ramirez whose announcement can be found on the FTC's home website: www.ftc.gov.

The FTC created this "one-stop website by combining its IdentityTheft website with its consumer complaint system to make it easier for identity theft victims to take two important steps: one, to file an identity theft complaint with the FTC; and two, to create a personalized recovery plan of the other steps they need to take. I went to IdentityTheft.gov and found the information about the steps consumers should follow, and in what order, to be very practical and jargon-free.

The personalized recovery plan is an important and positive feature of the new IdentityTheft.gov website. It will enable identity theft victims to be more pro-active on their own behalf. How will

the personalized recovery plan be created be done? Consumers going to the website will be able to create the documents they'll need to alert the police, the main credit bureaus, the IRS and other agencies about their situation.

The site will pre-fill the letters and forms that the consumer will need to file with various agencies. It will also enable the consumer to keep track of the progress of their complaint. Equally important, the IdentityTheft.gov website is not a "one size fits all". It has information about more than 30 types of identity theft and the accompanying recovery plans for each type so consumers can customize their respective step-by-step plan based on the specific type of identity theft which they've experienced (e.g., medical identity, child identity, tax-related, stolen SSN).

The new FTC website is also available in Spanish; that site is: RobodelIdentidad.gov. At the latter site, consumers can view the same automatically generate letters and other documents in Spanish. Those documents will be printed in English to be forwarded to the relevant agencies.

The FTC has also created an accompanying video that walks consumers through the various steps for using IdentityTheft.gov. I watched the short video which clearly explains the documents and related procedures.

As I said at the outset, I hope that no one ever needs to refer to the FTC or other resources. That hope, however, is likely not a realistic one. Given that reality, it is important for consumer to know about the FTC's new central website source of critical information and support for identity theft victims.