

How To Prevent Fraud

What is Identity Theft?

Sometimes called “Account Takeover Fraud” involves criminals stealing individuals’ personal information and assuming their identities. They use your identifying information to apply for credit cards and open bank accounts.

Here are some simple tips on how you can avoid becoming a victim of Identity Theft.

- Don’t give your social security number, account numbers, or other personal information about yourself to anyone who calls you, over the Internet, or through the mail unless you initiated the contact or know with whom you are dealing with.
- Store your personal information in a safe place and tear up or shred receipts and unused credit card offers before throwing them away. Criminals can collect bits of information about you by going through your trash.
- Review your monthly accounts regularly for any unauthorized charges.
- Order copies of your credit report once a year to ensure accuracy.
- Don’t open an e-mail from unknown sources and use virus detection software.
- Protect your PINs and passwords and change them frequently. Avoid using easily available information, such as your mother’s maiden name, your birth date, the last four digits of your social security number, your phone number, or anything that a thief could easily work out or determine.
- Guard your mail from theft. If you have the type of mailbox with a flag to signal that the box contains mail, do not leave bill payment envelopes in your mailbox with the flag up. Instead, deposit them in a post office collection box or at the local post office. Promptly remove incoming mail.
- Store in a safe place, a list of all your credit cards and bank accounts along with their account numbers, expiration dates and credit limits, as well as telephone numbers of customer service and fraud departments.
- Active duty military personnel deployed away from their regular duty station may place an Active Duty Alert in their file for 12 months (renewable). This signals lenders to take a little extra care before issuing credit to someone claiming to be the deployed service man or woman. One call to Experian, Equifax, or TransUnion is sufficient. The company you call is required to contact the other two companies so that they may add the alert to their files.

IF YOU BECOME A VICTIM OF IDENTITY THEFT

If you believe that someone has stolen your identity, you should:

1. Contact your bank and credit card issuers immediately so that the following can be done:
 - Access to your accounts can be protected
 - Stop payments on missing checks
 - PIN and Online Banking passwords changed
 - A new account can be opened
 - ATM and/or Debit Cards can have alerts placed
2. Contact local law enforcement and file a police report. You will be able to use the report to help clear up the record from the identity theft.
3. Contact the fraud department of each of the three major credit bureaus and report that your identity has been stolen. Also, consider placing a “fraud alert” on your file and request that no new credit is granted without prior approval. Request a free copy of your credit report from each credit bureau.
4. For any accounts that have been fraudulently accessed or opened, contact the security department of each affected creditor or financial institution. Consider closing these accounts. Also, on any new accounts you open, consider using a password, but do not use your mother’s maiden name or previously used passwords.
5. Maintain a written log of what happened, what was lost and the steps you took to report the incident to the various agencies, banks and firms impacted. Be sure to record the date, time, contact telephone numbers, person’s names and any relevant report or reference number and instructions.

Credit Bureaus

Equifax
1-800-525-6285

Experian
1-888-397-3742

Trans Union
1-800-680-7289

Contact the FTC’s Identity Theft Hotline toll-free at 1-877-ID-THEFT (438-4338) or www.consumer.gov/idtheft

The FTC puts the information into a secure consumer fraud database and shares it with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.