

PROTECT YOUR IDENTITY AND YOUR REPUTATION

WRITTEN BY Alaina Masler, Client Service Associate



Identity thieves use your information to open new lines of credit and steal money from your accounts.

The most prevalent type of identity theft is the misuse of an existing credit card.

IDENTITY THEFT

is the crime of stealing an individual's identifying information, including social security numbers, credit card and banking account numbers, usernames, and passwords, in order to use it for fraudulent purposes. Fraudulent uses of personal information include opening new credit accounts, stealing money from bank accounts, or using available credit.

STATISTICS

- 7% of households in the U.S. had at least one member experience identity theft in 2010.¹
- The most prevalent type of identity theft from 2005 to 2010 was misuse of an existing credit card.¹
- Identity theft is the largest complaint recorded at the Consumer Sentinel Network, ahead of debt collection, internet services, and prizes, sweepstakes and lotteries.²

HOW IDENTITY IS STOLEN

There are many ways a would-be thief can collect information to steal your identity. Understanding how your identity can be stolen is the first step in protecting yourself. Some of the most common methods thieves use include:

- **Dumpster diving:** The thief rummages through your trash looking for information.
- **Skimming:** The thief steals credit or debit card numbers by using a special storage device when processing your card.
- **Phishing:** The thief pretends to be someone they are not on the phone or internet.
- **Changing your address:** The thief completes a change of address form to divert your mail.

- **Old-fashioned stealing:** The thief steals your wallet or purse or takes private information from your employer.
- **Pretexting:** The thief uses false pretenses to obtain your personal information or money. For example, a thief calls you pretending to be a family member and asks for information or financial assistance.

PROTECT YOURSELF

There are several important and simple steps you can take to protect yourself against the threat of identity theft.

- **Monitor Your Credit:** Each of the three credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) allows you to check your credit report free every year. To do so, go to www.annualcreditreport.com or call 877.322.8228.
- Carefully check your account statements on a regular basis.
- Be vigilant about solicitations, calls, or emails from individuals who purport to be from your bank or other institutions. If you are concerned that the caller may not be who she or he purports to be, state that you will call the main number to verify that it is a legitimate call. Do not supply account numbers or personal information, especially your social security number, until you are comfortable with the recipient's identity and use of the information.
- Reduce the information that you carry with you (e.g., no social security cards).
- Shred personal documents that are no longer needed with a cross-cut or diamond-cut shredder.
- Do not use debit cards while shopping online.
- Before any asset leaves your control, ensure that all data is removed. Your information is not only stored in obvious places, such as in paper files, but also in home and office computers and laptops, cell phones, smart phones, tablets, GPS devices, and vehicles.
- Be sure to properly dispose of your electronic data. Merely deleting something from your computer does not mean it is gone. Companies such as Lumension (www.lumension.com) and EWC (www.ewastecenter.com) provide encryption, data destruction, and recycling services.



Only verify information when you have dialed the main number for your bank or credit card company.

Never supply personal information, especially your social security number, until you are comfortable with the recipient's identity and use of the information.

ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Friends, potential employers, and even thieves search for information about you online. What you (and others) say and do on social networking sites can jeopardize your privacy and your reputation.

Here are some tips to protect and enhance your online reputation:

- Make sure you have an online presence. It can be more detrimental to have nothing posted about you. Websites such as Google and Twitter are starting to establish “reputation scores” based on one’s social activity online. Companies such as Reputation.com offer services to protect and enhance your online presence.
- Ensure that everything you write online is positive!
- Conduct an online search for your name, including previous versions of your name and nicknames, so that you are aware of what others will see.
- Do not disclose birthdates, addresses, or other personal information.
- Check social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, even LinkedIn) to see where you may appear or be mentioned.
- Monitor postings and ask others to remove unflattering comments or photos of you from their sites. To “un-tag” a photo of yourself on Facebook and remove it from your profile, click “Report/Remove Tag” when viewing the photo. You can also indicate if a photo is harassing or illegal.
- Remember that e-mail always leaves a trail and is discoverable. Do not write anything you would not want on your permanent record. Disparaging remarks could be used against you in a court of law.



What you say and do on social networking sites can jeopardize your privacy and your reputation.

Do not disclose birthdates, addresses, or other personal information.

RESOURCES

- Federal Trade Commission (“FTC”) Identity Theft Resources: <http://ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/>.
- Opt Out Prescreen: Remove your name from marketing lists and limit the number of pre-approved credit offers you receive: www.optoutprescreen.com or 1.888.5OPTOUT
- Do Not Call Registry: Contact the FTC “Do Not Call Registry” to delete your name on lists used by nationwide marketers: www.donotcall.gov.
- Legal Requirements to provide your Social Security Number: This website lists purposes for which providing a SSN is required. http://ssa-custhelp.ssa.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/78/~/legal-requirements-to-provide-your-ssn
- ID Theft Prevention and Being “Cyber Safe” Resources: <http://jeffflanzaseminars.com/handouts.aspx>
- If you suspect you are a victim of identity theft, contact Market Street for a list of steps for you to take.

For more information, please contact Alaina Masler, Client Service Associate
1.800.962.6876 | amasler@marketstreettrust.com

Sources ¹Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice; ² Federal Trade Commission