



Identity Theft Prevention

Millions of people were victims of identity theft last year at a cost of billions of dollars. Millions more are in danger of identity theft due to data security breaches. It is the biggest consumer crime in the world. The purpose of this newsletter is to tell you more about it and provide some important steps to take protect yourself and your loved ones.

It Can Happen to Anyone

- Eldrick T. Woods aka Tiger Woods
- Ruben Studdard
- Paul Allen
- Warren Buffet
- Oprah Winfrey
- Steven Spielberg

The biggest identity thief is Abraham Abdallah, aka the eighty million dollar man. He was a dishwasher in New York. He posed as a phone executive and asked for background check for people on the Richest 400 list of the Forbes magazine.

How does Identify Theft Occur?

- It is high-tech, low-tech and no-tech
- Rogue employees at companies with which you do business
- Public records – did you know loan information has SSN listed below the signature line?
- Skimmers – electronic device that is tagged onto ATM or POS slot at banks or retail merchants
- Phishing
- Dumpster diving
- Keystroke logging programs
- Websites that sell stolen identity



Twenty Ways to Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones

1. Do not give out personal info on the phone to anyone you have not called.
2. Find out about security procedures where you work and do business.
3. Check your credit report for free at www.annualcreditreport.com or 1-877-322-8228. Run one from each bureau every 4 months. To be safe, you can get free credit report through www.ftc.gov.
4. Protect your social security number. When it is requested, you can say no and give some other information instead.
5. Protect your children's information. Very often minors won't know their identities have been stolen until they apply for financial aid or other types of credit many years down the road.
6. Opt out of information sharing.
7. Get off of pre-approved credit card lists at www.optoutprescreen.com or 1-888-567-8688.
8. Get off of junk mail lists at www.dmaconsumers.org.
9. Enroll in the do-not-call registry at www.donotcall.gov.
10. Can your mailbox at home be locked?
11. Use care when shopping on-line. Many vendors now allow payment through PayPal or Google where your personal information is not shared with the vendors. Verify the validity of the vendor through www.bbb.org.
12. Beware of downloads. Music downloads could result in installation of spyware and keystroke tracking software.
13. Do not write down your PIN. There are programs out there that guess what your PIN is based on your information.
14. Remove data from your computer when you get a new computer
15. Install anti-spyware, anti-virus and firewall programs on your computer and keep them up to date
16. Beware and use precautions when using Wi-Fi.
17. Choose better passwords – use case sensitive combination of letters and numbers.
18. Consider subscribing to a credit monitoring service where you will be notified each time your credit is checked or if there is an increase of in your credit card purchases that exceed a percentage or dollar amount that you've preset. (Sites: www.equifax.com or www.transunion.com)
19. Consider freezing your credit when you go on big trips.
20. Make sure you have a cross-shredding machine, not just a shredding machine.

Additional Resources

- "50 Ways to Protect Your Identity and Your Credit" by Steven J. J. Weisman