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Tools to Prevent IDENTITY THEFT

Protecting Your Identity

The number of Americans who have experienced identity theft has surpassed 27 million, with the incidence rate increasing every year. Substantial measures are in place at your credit union to protect your identity and your accounts against theft and fraud. For example, stringent **credit union privacy policies** protect your personal information. **Password protection for online transactions** helps assure online security. When using your online services, you develop a password that only you know. **Encryption** of online transactions converts your information into secure code, protecting you against hackers.

Maximum security is possible only with your help. Here's what you can do to stop these crimes before they happen:

- 1) Do not give out financial information** such as checking and credit card numbers, or your Social Security number, unless you know the person.
- 2) Report lost or stolen checks immediately.** Your credit union will block payment.
- 3) Notify your credit union of suspicious phone inquiries** such as those asking for account information to “verify a statement” or “award a prize.”
- 4) Closely guard your ATM Personal Identification Number (PIN) and ATM receipts.**
- 5) Shred any financial solicitations** and credit union statements before disposing of them.
- 6) Put outgoing mail** into a secure, official Postal Service collection box.
- 7) If regular bills fail to reach you,** call the company and find out why.
- 8) If your bills include questionable items,** don't ignore them. Instead, investigate immediately to head off any possible fraud.
- 9) Periodically contact the major credit reporting companies** to review your file and make certain the information is correct. (See related article on the FACT Act to learn more about obtaining free reports.)

Credit Reporting Bureaus

Equifax (www.equifax.com)

- Place a fraud alert: 1-888-766-0008
- Order a credit report: 1-800-685-1111

Experian (www.experian.com)

- Place a fraud alert: 1-888-397-3742
- Order a credit report: 1-888-397-3742

TransUnion (www.transunion.com)

- Place a fraud alert: 1-800-680-7289
- Order a credit report: 1-800-888-4213

If you have any questions or concerns about protecting your financial identity, come in and visit your credit union.

FACT Act Will Help Fight Identity Theft
Free credit reports for consumers

The Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act (FACT Act) will help reduce identity theft according to the Federal Trade Commission. One provision requires the three major credit-reporting agencies to provide consumers with a **free copy of their own credit report**. The requirement took effect December 2004, with a phase-in over nine months from West to East. By September 2005, all parts of the country will be covered.

Another provision is the **National Fraud Alert System**. Consumers, who reasonably suspect they have been or may be victimized by identity theft, or who are **military personnel on active duty** away from home, **can place an alert** on their credit files. The alert will put potential creditors on notice that they must proceed with caution when granting credit.

Other measure will help consumers **recover their credit reputation** after they have been victimized:

- Credit reporting agencies must **stop reporting allegedly fraudulent account information** when a consumer establishes that he or she has been the victim of identity theft;
- Creditors or businesses must **provide copies of business records** or fraudulent accounts or transactions related to them. This information can assist victims in proving that they are, in fact, victims.
- Consumers will be allowed to **report accounts affected by identity theft directly to creditors**-in addition to credit reporting agencies-to prevent the spread of erroneous credit information.

HOW TO OBTAIN A FREE CREDIT REPORT:

www.annualcreditreport.com

(877) 322-8228

www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/freereports.pdf

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