

# Simple Safeguards: Preventing Identity Theft



Presented by Retired  
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## 1. Protect Your Personal Information

- ✓ Don't carry your social security card.
- ✓ Don't provide your social security number to anyone unless there is a legitimate need for it.
- ✓ Be aware that most Medicare cards use the social security number as the Medicare number. Take steps to protect your card.

## 2. Protect Your Documents

- ✓ Shred your sensitive trash with a cross-cut or micro-cut shredder.
- ✓ Don't leave outgoing mail with personal information in your mailbox for pickup.

## 3. Be Vigilant Against Tricks

- ✓ Never provide personal information to anyone in response to an unsolicited request.
- ✓ Never reply to unsolicited emails from unknown senders or open their attachments.
- ✓ Don't click on links in emails from unknown senders.

## 4. Protect Your Communications

- ✓ Keep your computer and security software updated.
- ✓ Don't conduct sensitive transactions on a computer that is not under your control.
- ✓ Protect your Wi-Fi with a strong password and WPA2 encryption.

## 5. Protect Your Digital World

- ✓ Use strong passwords with at least eight characters including upper and lower case, numbers and symbols.
- ✓ Use different passwords for your various accounts.
- ✓ If you store passwords in a file on your computer, encrypt the file when you save it and assign a strong password to protect that file. This sounds obvious, but, don't name the file "passwords".
- ✓ Consider using password management programs.

### Social Networking Security Reminders

1. Login directly, not through links.
2. Only connect to people you know and trust.
3. Don't put your email address, physical address, or phone number or other personal information in your profile.
4. Sign out of your account after you use a public computer.

### Identity Theft for Tax Related Purposes

If you are the victim of identity theft, or at risk because your information has been breached, go to this site:

<https://www.irs.gov/uac/Taxpayer-Guide-to-Identity-Theft>

### To remove your name from lists:

Mail - [www.dmachoice.org](http://www.dmachoice.org); Phone - [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov)

To stop preapproved credit card offers:

[www.optoutprescreen.com](http://www.optoutprescreen.com) or 1-888-5-OPTOUT (567-8688)

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## Credit Reporting Bureaus

Equifax: (800) 525-6285

P.O. Box 740241 Atlanta, GA 30374

Experian: (888) 397-3742

P.O. Box 9530 Allen, TX 75013

Trans Union: (800) 680-7289

P.O. Box 2000, Chester, PA 19016

- To place a **fraud alert** on your account with all three credit reporting agencies:

[www.fraudalerts.equifax.com](http://www.fraudalerts.equifax.com)

- You are allowed 3 free reports each year; to order: On Web: [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)  
By Phone: 1-877-322-8228

### Terms to Understand:

1. **Fraud Alert:** Your credit file at all three credit reporting agencies is flagged and a potential lender should take steps to verify that you have authorized the request.

**Inside Scoop:** Fraud alerts only work if the merchant pays attention and takes steps to verify the identity of the applicant. They expire in 90 days unless you have been a victim of identity theft, in which case you can file an extended alert - it lasts for seven years.

2. **Credit Monitoring:** Your credit files are monitored by a third party - if activity occurs you are notified.

**Inside Scoop:** Talk to your insurance agent about what they offer. It is most likely the least expensive way to protect you and your family. You might consider [www.allclearid.com](http://www.allclearid.com) - it has a comprehensive protection plan.

3. **Credit Freeze:** A total lockdown of new account activity in your name. This requires unfreezing before you can open an account.

**Inside Scoop:** A proven way to protect against identity theft. Credit freeze laws vary by state. To check yours, go to your state Attorney General's website and search for "credit report freeze".

To Report Internet Fraud: [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov)

### Key Numbers

**FBI** (202) 324-3000 or your local field office

**FTC** 1-877-IDTHEFT

**Postal Inspection Service** 1-877-876-2455

**IRS** 1-800-829-0433

**Social Security Administration** 1-800-269-0271

**Identity Theft Resource:** [www.identitytheft.gov](http://www.identitytheft.gov)

**Craigslist Safety:** [www.craigslist.org/about/scams](http://www.craigslist.org/about/scams)