

“Thawing” the Freeze

Consumers who place a freeze on their credit report can temporarily or permanently remove the freeze or “thaw” their file to apply for new credit. To do so, follow the procedures in the confirmation letter each credit reporting agency sent when you first placed your security freeze. Each agency may charge a fee of no more than \$10 to lift the freeze.

When the agencies receive the request, by law they must lift the freeze within three business days provided the consumer has given the proper identification, their PIN or password, and a fee, if applicable.

Important note: If you temporarily lift the freeze to apply for new credit, keep in mind all merchants and lenders will have access to your account.

Security Breach Notification

As of **October 1, 2007**, individuals, businesses, or organizations that collect and maintain personal information are required to notify their customers of a security breach in the most expeditious time possible in one of the following manners:

- Written notification
- Electronic, if this is the customary means of communication between the organization and the customer
- Telephone notice, provided that contact is made directly with the affected customer

Notification to customers may be delayed if a law enforcement agency determines that it will impede a criminal investigation.

Social Security Number Protection

The Identity Theft Protection Act also prohibits any individual, private or public corporation or business, or other entity that maintains Social Security numbers from printing it on cards or documents that are mailed, or publicly displaying it or posting it. An exception is for records that are required by law to be made available to the public. This becomes **effective October 1, 2007**.

Safeguarding Sensitive Information

On **January 1, 2008**, all individuals, businesses, and organizations that collect and maintain personal identifying information must develop, implement, and maintain reasonable safeguards to ensure the security, confidentiality, and integrity of the information. Safeguarding also means properly disposing of information.



Preventing Identity Theft

The best deterrent to this crime is to be vigilant about your personal information:

- Keep your personal information, including your Social Security number, in a locked, secure place in your home.
- Shred financial documents, credit card offers, and other paperwork that you don't need.
- Ask if you can use an alternative identifier in place of your Social Security number.
- Do not give out any personal information over the phone, Internet, or through the mail unless you have initiated the contact and you are sure of who you're working with.

If you believe you are a victim of identity theft:

- File a police report to document the crime for your creditors.
- Report the theft to the Federal Trade Commission.
- For other prevention tips visit the FTC Web site, www.ftc.gov/identitytheft.



Contact Information:
Oregon Department of Consumer
and Business Services
(503) 378-4140, (866) 814-9710
www.dfcs.oregon.gov
Click on Identity Theft

Protecting
Your Personal
Information





Protecting Your Personal Information

Identity theft can strike without warning. Once your personal identifying information is stolen, it takes mere hours for a thief to run up thousands of dollars of merchandise using your credit card or debit card. Unfortunately for you, the victim, it takes hundreds of dollars and many months, or years, to clear up a once-clean credit history.

Each year thousands of Oregonians become victims of identity theft. In fact, Oregon is ranked 13th in the nation for this crime, according to the Federal Trade Commission. Those who commit identity theft do so by rummaging through trash looking for bank statements or other personal information. Or they steal someone's mail, wallet, or purse. They even will steal personnel records from businesses or bribe or con an employee who has access to these records.

The Oregon Identity Theft Protection Act of 2007 will provide Oregon consumers with tools to protect themselves against identity theft. And Oregon businesses will have clear direction and expectations to ensure the safety of the personal identifying information they maintain.

Personal information includes a consumer's name in combination with a Social Security number, Oregon driver's license or Oregon identification card number, financial, credit, or debit card number along with a security code or password that would allow someone to access a consumer's financial account.

Security Freeze

Effective October 1, 2007, all Oregonians will be able to place a security freeze on their credit file maintained by the three national credit reporting agencies: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. The freeze prevents lenders and others from gaining access to your credit report for review. In most cases, this preventative measure will block someone from opening a new account or borrowing money using your personal information.

Important note: Keep in mind that a security freeze will not prevent an identity thief from misusing existing credit cards and credit accounts.

Before you decide to apply a freeze, consider whether you intend to make a purchase that would require a look at your credit history. For example, if you plan to buy a cell phone and service, the company will need to access your credit files to finalize the sale.



Obtaining the Freeze

Consumers must write a separate letter to each of the three major credit reporting agencies and send it by mail. For sample letters, go to www.dfcs.oregon.gov and click on Identity Theft. By law the three credit agencies must have the freeze in place five business days after receiving the consumer's written request, proper identification, and a fee. The agencies also must send a written confirmation to the consumer within 10 business days after placing the freeze.

Fees. There is no fee if a person is a victim of identity theft or has reported the theft of their personal identifying information to a law enforcement agency. To prove this, you must submit a valid copy of a police incident report or a Federal Trade Commission Identity Theft Complaint Form.

If you are not an identity theft victim, you still may place a security freeze but you may have to pay a fee. By Oregon law each credit agency may charge no more than \$10 each to place a security freeze – a total of \$30. These fees are in addition to the cost of mailing your request.

It is important to safely keep all documents relating to your credit freeze. If you misplace or lose your assigned personal identification number or PIN, the credit reporting agencies can charge up to \$10 to reissue or reassign a new PIN.

Important note: One security freeze does not cover everyone in a household. Spouses must freeze their credit files separately.

Even if you have a credit freeze, government agencies, law enforcement and courts, and some private companies can still access your credit files. These include companies you are doing business with; companies to which you owe money; and collection agencies.



Credit reporting agency information:

TransUnion

Fraud Victim Assistance Department
P.O. Box 6790
Fullerton, CA 92834

Equifax

Equifax Security Freeze
P.O. Box 105788
Atlanta, GA 30348

Experian

Experian Security Freeze
P.O. Box 9554
Allen, TX 75013