



Identity Theft

The most talked about and reported form of identity theft is credit card fraud.

The United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) estimates 67% of victims report that one or more of their credit card accounts are misused and that 85% of all identity theft involved the misuse of some type of existing finance crime.

The best way to minimize the risk of having credit card information stolen and used is to tear up or shred all such applications before discarding them. For existing accounts, check the statements each month and report any charges that seem out of place. Most banks and credit card issuers these days will not hold a person responsible for fraudulent charged if reported promptly.

Take these steps to prevent further harm:

1. **Place a fraud alert** on your credit reports by contacting one of these credit reporting companies. The company you contact will notify the others:

TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289 www.transunion.com

Equifax: 1-800-525-6285 www.equifax.com
Place a fraud alert on my credit report, call 1-888-766-008

Experian: 1-888-397-3742 www.experian.com

2. **Close compromised accounts immediately.** Call every company where an account has been tampered with or opened fraudulently. Review your credit reports for additional fraudulent accounts. Close them where necessary. Follow up in writing.

3. **Report the identity theft** to the Federal Trade Commission: www.ftc.gov/idtheft or 1-877-ID-THEFT. Complete the online complaint form and bring a printed copy of it when you file a police report.

4. **File a police report** and ask the police to attach your FTC complaint to the police report. Get a copy of the report for your own records.

When researching the topic of identity theft or trying to find ways of battling the crime, the best source to consult is the United States Federal Trade Commission. The FTC is the government agency charged with upholding fair and legal business practices along with investigating fraud and identity theft. Visit www.ftc.gov/idtheft for more information about your rights.