



For Immediate Release
September 12, 2017
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**The Illinois Bankers Association Offers These Tips for Navigating
the Equifax Data Breach and Protecting Your Personal Information**

Equifax — one of our nation’s three major credit reporting bureaus — announced last week that it had been breached. Hackers accessed personal information from over 143 million Americans, including their social security numbers, birth dates, addresses, and in some cases, driver’s license numbers. In addition, credit card numbers for more than 200,000 people appear to have been stolen.

Equifax has created a website — <https://www.equifaxsecurity2017.com> — where consumers can check to see if their personal information may have been exposed. (*Be sure to access the site from a secure computer!*) Consumers also can call Equifax at 866-447-7559 for more information. Equifax also will be sending a mailing to all consumers who may have had their information stolen — however, this could take time.

Below are additional steps that consumers should take.

- Obtain your credit report every year from each of the three major credit bureaus — **Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion**. All consumers are entitled to obtain a **free copy** of their credit report from each of these companies every 12 months. You can do this by visiting www.annualcreditreport.com, or by calling each of them by phone (Experian at 888-397-3742, TransUnion at 800-680-7289, and Equifax at 800-525-6285).
- Consider placing a “credit freeze” on your credit reports with these companies. In most states, including Illinois, each credit bureau may charge you up to a \$10 fee for a credit freeze. (Equifax announced on Sept. 12 that it will no longer charge \$10 for a security freeze.) A credit freeze prevents lenders and others from accessing your credit information, making it much harder for someone to open a new account of any kind in your name — only your current creditors will be able to access your credit report. Also note that you can tell the credit bureaus to lift your credit freeze if you need to apply for new credit, which you can do for a particular credit application or temporarily for a chosen period of time. Keep in mind that a credit freeze won’t prevent your creditors from reporting your payments on existing accounts to the credit bureaus.
- Pay close attention to credit card and bank account statements for any unauthorized charges.
- Consider placing a fraud alert on your credit report files. This alert warns creditors that you may be an identity theft victim, and they should take extra steps to verify that anyone seeking credit in your name is really you!

- Consider enrolling in a credit monitoring service. Equifax is offering one free year of credit monitoring to all consumers, regardless of whether your personal information may have been stolen. You can find many other reputable companies that offer this type of service by conducting an Internet search for credit monitoring services.

Know that protecting your personal information is of paramount importance for your bank. All banks are required by law to use a combination of rigorous safeguards to protect their customers' information, including strict privacy policies, encryption, two-factor identification, and extensive employee training. Banks also use sophisticated fraud detection software algorithms that constantly monitor accounts to help flag fraud and identity theft. Your bank invests substantial time and resources to ensure that your accounts and personally identifying information are fully secure.

We also strongly recommend taking these additional precautions to protect your personal information.

Extra Steps for Protecting Your Personal Information

- Never provide personal information, including your password, in response to an unsolicited phone call, website or email request. Some of these requests are now even coming by automated phone messages and mobile phone texts, asking consumers to enter their credit or debit card numbers for some kind of verification.
- If you believe that a request for your personal information may be legitimate, contact the financial institution yourself, rather than responding to the communication.
- Remind your children and elderly relatives to never share their address, telephone number, passwords, social security number, school name or any other personally identifying information.
- Collect your mail promptly. Ask the post office to put your mail on hold, or have a neighbor pick up your mail, when you are away from home for more than a couple of days.
- Shred receipts, bank statements and unused credit card offers, or tear them up before throwing them away.
- If you are conducting business online, make sure that your browser's "padlock" or "key icon" is active, indicating a secure transaction.
- Never open email from unknown sources, and keep your computer up-to-date with virus detection software, anti-spam filters, and bad website blockers.
- When using social networking sites, never include your personal information such as your birthdate, email address, physical address, mother's maiden name, or other information that could provide sensitive information to criminals or hints to passwords.
- Change your website passwords frequently, and never use the same password for multiple websites. Consider using software that acts as a password manager — some of

the more popular ones include 1Password, Dashlane, LastPass, RoboForm, and KeePass (which is free).

Importantly, if you suspect your identity has been stolen, immediately call your bank and credit card issuers, so they can begin working on protecting your compromised accounts and clearing your name! Additionally, file a police report, and then contact the three major credit bureaus.

For more assistance, call the Federal Trade Commission's "ID Theft Consumer Response Center" at 1-877-ID THEFT, or go online at www.ftc.gov/idtheft.

The Illinois Bankers Association is a full-service trade association dedicated to creating a positive business climate that benefits the entire banking industry and the communities we serve. Founded in 1891, the IBA brings together state and national banks and savings banks of all sizes in Illinois.

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