

Take Charge of Your Personal Data

Identity theft is one of the most prevalent types of fraud, affecting millions of consumers each year. Crafty criminals can steal personal information like contact information, credit card numbers and passwords through phishing, hacking, cold-calling and even dumpster diving, all while running up steep financial tabs and wreaking havoc with their victims' credit histories.

Be assured that the protection of their customers' personal information is paramount for banks. Banks invest time and resources to ensure account and identifying information is fully secured, and they also use a combination of safeguards to protect consumer information, such as employee training, strict privacy policies, rigorous security standards and encryption systems. Many banks also have special fraud detection software that constantly monitors accounts to help flag identity fraud.

Tips for Protecting Your Personal Information

- Never provide your personal information, including your password, in response to an unsolicited Internet or e-mail request. Some requests are now even coming via automated phone messages asking for the consumer to enter his card number for verification.
- If you believe the contact may be legitimate, contact the financial institution yourself.
- Remind your children (or elderly parents) never to share their address, telephone number, password, social security number, school name or any other personal information.
- Review account statements regularly to ensure all charges are correct, and balance your checking account on a regular basis.
- Collect mail promptly. Ask the post office to put your mail on hold when you are away from home for several days.
- Shred receipts, bank statements and unused credit card offers or tear them up before throwing them away.
- If conducting business online, make sure your browser's padlock or key icon is active, indicating a secure transaction.
- Don't open e-mail from unknown sources and keep your computer up-to-date with virus detection software, anti-spam filters and blockers.
- Be sure to obtain your free credit report each year from one of the nationwide consumer credit reporting companies listed below.
- When using social networking sites, never include personal contact information like your birthdate, e-mail address, physical address, mother's maiden name or other information that could provide sensitive information to fraudsters or hints to passwords.

If you suspect your identity has been stolen, call your bank and credit card issuers immediately so they can start working on closing your compromised accounts and clearing your name. Additionally, file a police report and these three credit reporting companies:

Equifax – 800-525-6285

Experian – 888-397-3742

TransUnion – 800-680-7289

For more assistance, contact the Federal Trade Commission's ID Theft Consumer Response Center at 1-877-ID THEFT or 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 they serve. Founded in 1891, the IBA brings together state and national banks and savings banks of all sizes in Illinois. Collectively, the IBA represents nearly 90 percent of the assets of the Illinois banking industry, which employs more than 100,000 men and women in nearly 5,000 offices across the state. Visit www.ilbanker.com.