

# GICU Knowledge Base

## Guard Yourself Against Identity Theft

Identity theft is a modern version of burglary; a thief uses your personal information to gain access to your finances and commit fraud. Thieves use information such as your social security number, credit information, and other data to set up new credit cards or lines of credit under your name, and can even get a driver's license in your name, or other form of official identification. Victims of identity theft usually find out about the crime much too late, and end up spending incredible amounts of time and money to clean up their credit history.

### *Following are some tips for preventing identity theft:*

- ◆ Verify the credentials of anyone asking you for personal financial information. If someone emails you or calls and asks for this type of information, hang up and call the organization the caller claimed to represent.
- ◆ When it is an option, use an alternate identification number to your social security number. For example, do not put your social security number on your driver's license.
- ◆ Check your credit report at least once a year. (See the end of this article for credit bureau information.) If any items with personal information are stolen from you, check your credit report more often.
- ◆ Check all bills, especially credit card bills, carefully for any unusual charges.
- ◆ Shred personal documents such as account statements, credit card applications, and any other documents with personal financial information.
- ◆ Do not put outgoing mail in your home mailbox that contains personal financial information. This is the easiest place a thief can gain access to your identity.

### *If you believe you are a victim of identity theft:*

- ◆ Contact all three credit bureaus and ask them to place a fraud alert on your file (see the end of this article for credit

bureau information.) Ask for a copy of your credit report.

- ◆ File a report with your local police and/or in the town where the fraud took place. Save a copy of the police report in your files.
- ◆ File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) via the Identity Theft Hotline (1-877-IDTHEFT.)
- ◆ Contact any creditors of fraudulent accounts via phone and follow up in writing, keeping copies for your files. Close any suspicious accounts and change passwords if applicable.
- ◆ Ask creditors if they will accept the FTC's ID Theft Affidavit. The affidavit is available by calling the hotline above or online at: [www.consumer.gov/idtheft](http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft). This form can be used to notify several companies simultaneously.
- ◆ Check with the Social Security Administration to verify the security of your social security number. You can call 800-772-1213 to check your social security statement for accurate reporting of earnings information.

### *The three major credit bureaus include:*

- ◆ Experien (888-397-8742)  
[www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)
- ◆ Equifax (800-685-1111)  
[www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)
- ◆ TransUnion (800-916-8800)  
[www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)