



Identity Theft Prevention

Savant recently hosted Jeff Lanza, a retired FBI special agent of 20 years and an expert in cybercrime and identity theft prevention, in select cities for “Why The FBI Can’t Stop Cybercrime and How You Can.” Now, he’s sharing his inside tips on how to safeguard your identity. You may never be able to completely prevent identity theft, but there are some steps you can take to help protect yourself from becoming a victim.

Simple Safeguards to Prevent Identity Theft

5 Tips from Retired FBI Agent Jeff Lanza

#1: Protect Your Personal Information

- Don't carry your social security card. The key to identity theft is your social security number.
- Don't provide your social security number to anyone unless there is a legitimate reason, which includes occasions when you are applying for employment, opening a financial account, getting a credit check, and checking or freezing your credit reports.

#2: Protect Your Documents

- Shred your sensitive trash with a cross-cut, micro-cut, or diamond-cut shredder.
- Don't leave outgoing mail with personal information in your mailbox for pickup.

#3: Be Vigilant Against Tricks

- Never provide personal information to anyone in response to an unsolicited request.
- Never reply to unsolicited emails from unknown senders or open their attachments.
- Don't click on links in emails from unknown senders.

#4: Protect Your Communications

- Keep your computer and security software updated.
- Don't conduct sensitive transactions on a computer that is not under your control.
- Protect your Wi-Fi with a strong password and WPA2 encryption.

#5: Protect Your Digital World

- Use strong passwords with at least 12 characters.
- Use different passwords for your various online accounts.
- Consider using password management programs. Or use the “Notes” app on your phone, as long as you secure the note with a password.

FOUR OPTIONS TO PREVENT NEW ACCOUNT FRAUD



FRAUD ALERT

Your credit file at the four credit reporting agencies is flagged and a potential lender should take steps to verify the identity of a person opening a new account.

INSIDE SCOOP: Not worth the effort. Fraud alerts only work if the merchant takes steps to verify the identity of the applicant. They expire automatically after one year or seven years if you have been a proven victim of identity theft.

CREDIT LOCK

Limits access to your credit reports by some parties without your approval.

INSIDE SCOOP: Don't use this. Locks are not governed by federal law, there is no guarantee of error free operation, and some credit reporting agencies may charge you a monthly fee for this service.

CREDIT MONITORING

Your credit files are monitored and if activity occurs, you are notified.

INSIDE SCOOP: Credit monitoring does not prevent fraud; it only notifies you when your credit reports have been accessed. In most cases, the monitoring companies provide resolution services, which can be very beneficial.

CREDIT FREEZE

Restricts access to your credit reports and should prevent new account activity in your name. This requires unfreezing (lifting) before you can open a new account.

INSIDE SCOOP: This is highly recommended and is a proven way to protect against new account fraud. As of September 2018, it is free to freeze your credit reports and to create and freeze credit reports for minors in every state.

CREDIT REPORTING BUREAUS

Equifax: (800) 525-6285; (800) 685-1111 to freeze your credit report; P.O. Box 740241 Atlanta, GA 30374

Experian: (888) 397-3742; (888) 397-3742 to freeze your credit report; P.O. Box 9530 Allen, TX 75013

Trans Union: (800) 680-7289; (888) 909-8872 for freezing your credit report; P.O. Box 2000, Chester, PA 19016

Innovis: (800) 540-2505; (800) 540-2505 to freeze your credit report; P.O. Box 1640 Pittsburgh, PA 15230

Every consumer is entitled to four free credit reports each year. To order, go to annualcreditreport.com or call 877-322-8228. For your Innovis credit report, go to innovis.com/personal/creditreport.



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