



NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. Credit Reporting Companies Launch New Identity Fraud Initiative

In a move to provide consumers with another tool in the fight against identity fraud, the nation's credit reporting companies -- Equifax, Experian and TransUnion -- have simplified the way victims notify them about the crime. Identity fraud victims can make one toll-free call to any of the nationwide credit reporting companies and be confident that it will result in all three companies taking the same aggressive steps to help protect their credit information.

"This is the newest in a series of proactive and voluntary initiatives by the credit reporting industry to make it easier for victims to communicate with our members and to help protect them from additional identity fraud," said Stuart Pratt, President and CEO of the Consumer Data Industry Association. "We have been aggressive and we will continue to be aggressive in working with our members and with law enforcement to find ways to help victims and to encourage vigorous prosecution of ID fraud criminals. With one phone call, victims will have, in essence, contacted all of the national credit reporting companies. This makes it easier for the victim to report the crime, and it reduces the emotional burden, as well. Equally important, with a single call, victims can take the proactive step of reducing the chances that they will be further victimized because they can be confident that lenders will be sent a security alert notifying them of the circumstances of the crime."

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The process is simple. When an identity fraud victim calls any one of the three national credit reporting companies, the company contacted will share that information with the other two. Each company will follow a standardized three-step process to post a security alert on the credit file, opt the victim out of preapproved offers of credit or insurance and mail the victim a copy of his or her credit file.

Here is what the process will look like in more detail once the victim makes a call:

- The company receiving the initial call will notify the victim of the ID fraud initiative and will electronically notify the other two credit reporting companies of the crime;
- A fraud alert will be put on the victim's credit report at all three nationwide credit reporting companies within 24 hours;
- The victim will be opted out of all preapproved offers of credit and insurance for two years;
- The victim's request for a copy of his or her credit report will be handled in no more than three business days. Each of the three national credit reporting companies will work with the victim to verify the information in their respective reports and to delete any fraudulent data. If the victim files a police report, the process is even quicker. CDIA's national credit reporting company members will voluntarily expedite services for the victim by immediately deleting fraudulent data without the usual reinvestigation procedure; and,
- The fraud alert will be displayed by each national credit reporting agency to all lenders or other users that access the reports in the future. Once notified that the consumer has been a victim of ID fraud, the lender can then avoid opening a fraudulent account.

CDIA members formed the first industry task force to address the issue in 1997. Since then, several programs have been adopted by the industry to specifically target the crime of ID fraud. Some of the more significant initiatives are:

- Adopting a six-point program that includes a standardized three-step program for responding to victims, ensuring victims' files remain corrected after a reinvestigation by providing additional free disclosures of files during the next 90 days, assisting consumers in contacting their creditors regarding the crime and implementing procedures that help creditors better identify fraud alerts on credit reports;

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- Without additional reinvestigation procedures, deleting fraudulent items from appearing on the credit report when the consumer submits a police report notifying the credit reporting agency of crime; and,
- Supporting educational efforts of groups like Call For Action and others as they provide consumer's and victims with materials on identity fraud prevention.

"We will continue to work with victims to ease their burdens, to partner with lenders to prevent additional identity fraud from occurring, and to support law enforcement's need for additional resources to properly investigate the crime and prosecute criminals," Pratt said. He noted that efforts appear to be working. One reflection of that is that the Federal Trade Commission's recent reports from their ID Theft Clearinghouse (1.877.ID.THEFT or 1.877.438.4338) indicate that more victims than ever are identifying the crime in a short period of time, which reduces the extent of the harm. He added that the national credit reporting companies report that more calls are now fielded from consumers wanting information on how to protect themselves from ID fraud than from those who are victims of the crime.

The credit reporting companies' fraud assistance departments can be contacted at the following numbers. A single call to just one of these numbers is all that a victim needs to make:

Equifax	1.800.525.6285
Experian	1.888.397.3742
TransUnion	1.800.680.7289

Founded in 1906, the Consumer Data Industry Association is the international trade association that represents more than 400 consumer data companies. CDIA members include the nation's leading institutions in credit reporting, mortgage reporting, check verification, fraud prevention, risk management, employment reporting, tenant screening and collection services.

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