

Taking Control of Your Credit Identity

The belief that you are in complete control of your own life is something that can get you into some pretty serious trouble if you aren't careful. Your unique identity, your reputation and especially your credit scores are ruled by your own actions, but only to an extent. To truly know that your life and your identity are under your own control, you need to take identity theft prevention measures.

Identity theft protection enables you to rest secure in the knowledge that your financial status will not be threatened by an inaccurate credit score. What if your personal information was stolen by a hacker? How quickly would you become aware of that fact?

All too often I receive phone calls from people telling me that after reading my newsletter they decided to check their own credit reports, only to discover that they weren't in the clear after all. Whether you see a credit report with accounts that are not your own or receive calls or letters from collectors calling about debts that you never incurred, it's not a good feeling.

Unfortunately, I can't exactly give these people good news immediately. Through no fault of their own, these people have a long hard road of clean-up work ahead of them. It can take years to recover your credit identity.

Current reports state that 10,000,000 people, this year alone, will have their identities stolen and that 1 in 4 credit reports contain information that is damaging and even, worse, inaccurate. This will have some pretty negative results, including the loss of employment or rental opportunities, higher insurance or interest rates and the potential for being denied credit.

One of the main places that data is stolen from is from very large databases such as those found in universities, state and federal entities and private businesses. These databases are more or less gold to a thief. Once your personal information is in the hands of an identity thief, they can control your life to a very unsettling degree.

Even scarier, your information can be bought and sold multiple times. In the cases of children's identities, thieves can use and sell their Social Security Numbers, usually for years without even being detected. When the child grows up and discovers that their identity has been stolen, they face years of work to reclaim an identity that they have never even used.

When it comes to identity theft prevention, it's important not to rely on anyone other than yourself to safeguard your information. It is always easier to protect your credit proactively than it is to react once your identity has been stolen.

Here are a few identity theft protection resources:

www.attrition.org/dataloss -A database that includes a running list of reported data breaches.

Annualcreditreport.com-The only legitimate place to obtain your annual free credit report. Call this toll free number: 877-322-8228.

National Do Not Call Registry: (888) 382-1222 or www.donotcall.gov to reduce telemarketing.

888) 5-OPT-OUT / (888) 567-8688 or opt out online at www.optoutprescreen.com to opt of pre-approved credit card offers.

About the Author

Denise Richardson is an author, freelance writer and advocate who educates the public on [identity theft protection](#), [identity theft prevention](#) and credit reporting issues. She is a Board member of American Consumer Credit Education Support Services, a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public on credit matters. She is founder of <http://www.givemebackmycredit.com> .

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