

IDENTITY THEFT 101

When your identity is stolen your credit score can be damaged. This may prevent you from obtaining a loan or a line of credit. It can be an incredibly stressful experience.

Thieves can steal your identity in many different ways, including:

- Stealing your wallet or mail
- “Dumpster diving” through your trash
- “Phishing” personal information by getting you to respond to fake emails or telephone calls.
- “Skimming” your information from an ATM
- Fraudulently obtaining your credit report

What your stolen identity can be used for:

- Opening fraudulent accounts in your name, including credit card accounts, hospital charges, and even home loans

What you can do to prevent identity theft:

- Report stolen credit/debit cards immediately and review your billing statements regularly to find inconsistencies
- Shred any documents that include personal information
- Make sure any website where you enter personal information is secure
- Be wary of deals that sound too good to be true
- Make sure you have a security system on your computer and change your passwords often
- Do not give personal information to unsolicited callers
- Order your credit report at least once a year from annualcreditreport.com and look for any accounts that you did not open or that seem suspicious



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR IDENTITY IS STOLEN

When you discover your identity has been stolen, you should take immediate action to prevent the thieves from making fraudulent charges in your name.

1. Place a fraud alert and/or security freeze on your credit report

You can get started by visiting these websites

- Experian:
www.experian.com
- Equifax:
www.equifax.com
- TransUnion:
www.transunion.com



2. Close all fraudulent accounts

- You can call the original creditors and also inform the CRAs

3. File a police report

- **This step is very important:** many CRAs and original creditors will not take an identity theft dispute seriously without a police report
- Call the non-emergency line at your local police department:
 - Portland Police Bureau—(503) 823-3333
 - Gresham Police Department—(503) 823-3333
 - Beaverton Police Department—(503) 629-0111
 - Hillsboro Police Department—(503) 629-0111
 - Vancouver Police Department—(360) 487-7397

4. File a Complaint with the Federal Trade Commission

- This helps track where identity theft is occurring, which can lead to investigations and prosecutions
- www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov

CREDIT REPORTING AND IDENTITY THEFT

The Fair Credit Reporting Act (“FCRA”) applies to the major consumer reporting agencies (“CRAs”) — Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion—and to any other person or company that regularly compiles consumer credit information or other information for the purpose of furnishing these reports to third parties for monetary compensation.

At the request of the consumer, CRAs are required to do certain things if your identity is stolen:

- Put a “freeze” on your account. This prevents the CRAs from releasing your credit report without your approval
- Put a “fraud alert” on your account that remains on your credit report for at least 90 days. This requires the creditor to request proof of identity before extending credit in your name
- Block the reporting of the fraudulent account(s) and provide notification of the block and identity theft to the Account Name listed
- Investigate the disputed information and remove the account within 30 days from the receipt of the dispute letter

If a collection company is pursuing a debt as a result of identity theft, at the request of the consumer, a debt collector must:

- Cease furnishing the fraudulent information to the CRAs
- Inform the original creditor that the account is a result of identity theft
- Cease and desist communication with the consumer
- Not sell or transfer the debt to another collection company
- Verify the debt. If your initial communication with the debt collector is by phone, the Collector must send a collection notice within five days



BASIC DISPUTE LETTER TO THE CREDIT REPORTING AGENCY

[DATE]

[CRA Name]
[Address 1]
[Address 2]
[City, State, Zip]

Re: [Insert Name of Account and Account Number]

To Whom It May Concern:

When reviewing my credit report from your agency, I found under [NAME LOCATION FOUND. E.g. Negative Items, Revolving accounts, etc] an account from [ACCOUNT NAME(S)]. The status of this account is [UNPAID/COLLECTION/ETC]. [IF COLLECTION: This collection account is the result of a fraudulent account opened in my name without my knowledge] [IF REGULAR ACCOUNT: This account was a product of the identity theft and was opened without my knowledge].

I request the following from your agency:

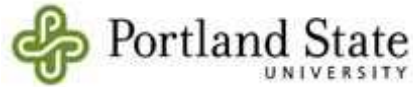
- Block the reporting of all the accounts listed above within four business days after the receipt of this letter.
- Provide notification to all of the accounts listed above of this block and that these accounts were the result of identity theft.
- Investigate this disputed information and remove these accounts from my credit report within 30 days from the receipt of this letter.
- Provide notice to [ACCOUNT NAME] within five business days of receipt of this letter that these accounts are in dispute.
- Provide written notice to me of the results of your investigation no later than five business days after the completion of the investigation.

Enclosed you will find the appropriate identifying information including a copy of my: driver's license with my current address, social security card, the police report I filed with [POLICE BUREAU] [CASE NUMBER] on [DATE], a complaint filed with the FTC [REFERENCE NUMBER] on [DATE], and the relevant page(s) from my credit report

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Address 1]
[Address 2]
[City, State, Zip]

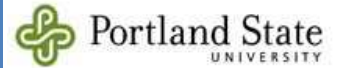


Student Legal Services
Portland State University
PO Box 791
1825 SW Broadway
Smith Memorial Student Union M343
Portland, OR 97207

Phone: 503-725-4556
Fax: 503-725-4555
www.pdx.edu/sls

Disclaimer

This pamphlet is for **informational purposes only and should not** be relied upon as legal advice. In each case, specific legal advice should be obtained, which will be responsive to the circumstances of the individual requesting this advice



STUDENT . LEGAL . SERVICES

IDENTITY THEFT AND YOUR CREDIT REPORT



Portland State University

Telephone: 503-725-4556