



Fraud Watch Network



Freezing your credit can freeze out would-be scammers

Dear Dwight,

Guarding your identity and credit doesn't have to be expensive. In fact, one of the most effective ways you can help protect yourself is with a free credit freeze.

A credit freeze safeguards your credit and is the most effective way to protect against identity fraud. With a credit freeze, an identity thief is unable to obtain credit in your name, thereby greatly minimizing the potential damage that identity theft can cause.



How It Works

- Fraudsters can use information gathered from data breaches to establish credit in another person's name, posing significant financial liability on the unsuspecting consumer and negatively affecting the consumer's credit rating. With a freeze in place, no one can open a line of credit in your name.
 - A credit freeze restricts access to your credit file, so you will need to lift the freeze before applying for new credit, and then refreeze it. (These steps are free.)
 - You can freeze your credit by phone, online or by mail with all three credit bureaus: Experian, Transunion and Equifax.
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What You Should Know

- In most states, credit freezes remain in place indefinitely, and are only lifted when you ask for it to be. But in a few states, they expire after seven years.
- A credit freeze does NOT affect your credit score.



What You Should Do

- If you are not planning to request a credit line anytime soon (say for a car purchase, mortgage or credit card), set up credit freezes today to protect against identity fraud.
- Parents should also consider freezing their children's credit. With a Social Security number and a clean credit history, identity thieves can apply for credit cards, loans, utility service or even government benefits in your child's name — or attach any name and date of birth to create a false identity under that Social Security number.
- If you believe you may have fallen victim to fraud, call the AARP Fraud Watch Network Helpline at [1-877-908-3360](tel:1-877-908-3360) for guidance and support.

When it comes to fraud, vigilance is our number one weapon. You have the power to protect yourself and your loved ones from scams. Please share this alert with friends and family.

Sincerely,

Kathy Stokes

AARP Fraud Watch Network