



## What is Identity Theft?

Identity theft occurs when someone assumes your identity by using your social security number and personal information to open bank, credit card or other accounts in an attempt to commit fraud or theft.

- If you become a victim of identity theft, act quickly in order to clean up your credit.
- Obtain a copy of your credit reports from the three major credit reporting agencies: Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. Ask them to place a fraud alert on your credit report. Include a statement that asks creditors to call you for permission before any new accounts are opened in your name.
- Contact creditors for any accounts that have been tampered with or opened without your knowledge. Be sure to put complaints in writing.
- File a police report and send copies to your creditors and credit bureaus as proof of the crime.
- Report the fraud to the Office of the Inspector General's fraud hotline.

You can protect yourself against identity theft in the following ways:

- Guard your Social Security number and keep track of all of your accounts.
- Routinely check your credit report for unauthorized activity - get a credit report at least once a year and clean up any errors.
- Buy a shredder and destroy bills, pre-approved credit offers, and other documents with personal information before throwing them out.
- Stay on top of your finances, especially bill due dates, so you'll know if a bill is missing.
- Carefully monitor your bank accounts and reconcile your checkbook regularly.
- Know your bank's policies regarding account errors and loss. Read the fine print.