
Free Credit Freezes & Fraud Alerts

An extra measure of protection is available to safeguard your credit files and personal information.

Free protection for your credit files and personal information!

Fraudsters have been opening new accounts and lines of credit using stolen personal information. Now you can take action to protect your personal financial security. You can place a credit freeze, a fraud alert, or an extended fraud alert on your credit reports at no charge.

■ Credit freeze

The three nationwide credit bureaus will restrict access to your credit report to all parties. You must lift the credit freeze if you want a business, lender or employer to review your credit report. Upon your request, the credit bureau will lift the freeze either temporarily or permanently at no charge to you.

Here are the facts:

- It doesn't affect your credit score.
- If the freeze is requested by phone or online, then the credit bureau must act to place the freeze within one business day. A request to lift it must be completed in one hour.
- Mail requests take three business days after receipt of the request to process.
- Contact each of the three nationwide credit bureaus to request a credit freeze.
- Companies that you do business with already will still have access to your credit report.
- Your free weekly credit report(s) is available through December 2023.

Credit bureau information

- Equifax - 800-685-1111
www.equifax.com
- Experian - 888-397-3742
www.experian.com
- TransUnion - 800-888-4213
www.transunion.com

Security takeaway: Continue to monitor your existing financial accounts for fraudulent transactions and report any unusual activity to your financial institution.

■ Fraud alert

When you place a fraud alert on your credit file with the three nationwide credit bureaus, then before a business can open a new line of credit in your name, it must have proper verification of your identity and your approval is also required.

- The fraud alert stays on your credit report for one year — then you must renew the alert.
- Place the alert with one credit bureau and they will contact the other two credit bureaus.
- Make sure the credit bureaus have your current contact information for identity verification and approval.
- Your free weekly credit report(s) is available through December 2023.

■ Extended fraud alert

An extended fraud alert is available only to identity theft victims and requires that an Identity Theft Report be filed.

- You can receive 2 free annual credit reports from each credit bureau per year.
- Your name will be removed from the marketing lists for prescreened credit offers for five years unless you request it.
- Place the alert with one credit bureau and they will contact the other two credit bureaus for you.

■ Resources

- Federal Trade Commission:
www.ftc.gov
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau:
www.consumerfinance.gov