



How to Protect Yourself after the Equifax Data Breach

You may have seen or read the recent news regarding the Equifax data breach as hackers potentially stole personal information of up to 143 million people. The names, Social Security number, birth dates, addresses, and driver's license numbers may have been compromised. Unfortunately, that kind of information can be used by someone else to open bank accounts, credit cards, and loans in your name.

The credit cards of 209,000 people were also accessed. Those people will be notified directly by Equifax and their card provider. Equifax has made available a website where you can check to see if your information was potentially impacted by entering your last name and the last six digits of your Social Security number.

<https://www.equifaxsecurity2017.com/enroll/>

Based on the information you provide, you will receive a message indicating whether your personal information may have been impacted by the recent incident. Regardless, you will have the opportunity to enroll on a complimentary basis in their Trusted ID credit monitoring service.

If you have concerns in regards to whether your personal information has ended up in the wrong hands, there are things you can do to help protect yourself against identity theft.

Check Your Free Credit Reports

Under federal law, you are allowed to request a free copy of your credit report annually from each of the three credit reporting agencies; Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. You can do so at:

<https://www.annualcreditreport.com>

The report will allow you to check the accuracy of your credit information and see if new credit checks were done and accounts opened in your name.

Fraud Alert

You can place a fraud alert for free by contacting any one of the credit reporting agencies. Upon doing so, they are required to notify the other two. The fraud alert will notify you if someone applies for credit in your name.

Equifax: 888-766-0008
Experian: 888-397-3742
TransUnion: 800-680-7289

Monitor Bank Accounts and Credit Card Statements

Regularly review your bank, credit card, and brokerage account statements to check for any suspicious activity. Opt for eStatements whenever possible to prevent sensitive account information from getting lost or misdirected in the mail. Most banks and credit card issuers also offer email and text alerts to notify you when transactional activity occurs. You can enroll in eStatements and Alerts at Valley Bank via our online banking portal at www.valleybanknv.com. Call us at (702) 259-2658 if you need any assistance.

Credit Monitoring

A credit monitoring service will alert you when a company checks your credit history, a new loan or credit card is opened in your name, a creditor reporting a late payment, as well as other financial information available in public records such as bankruptcy filings.

Additionally, some service includes identity theft protection to alert you when your personal information is being used for things that don't normally show up on a credit report. Examples would include utility enrollments, payday loan applications, and social media.

While there is normally a cost associated with these services, Equifax is currently offering 1 year of its Trusted ID service for free regardless of whether your personal information was affected by the recent data breach.

Credit Freeze

In the event your data has been compromised, you can also contact any of the credit reporting agencies to place a credit freeze on your account. This step is probably unnecessary for most people unless they have actually had their data compromised and are actually seeing suspicious activity occurring. The credit freeze prevents anyone who does not have an existing credit relationship from with you from accessing your credit information. However it can create a lot of inconvenience for you too. If you're applying for credit yourself, you will need to have the credit freeze removed (thawed) in order to allow the creditor to check your information. Costs for a credit freeze vary for each state, but typically range from \$5 to \$10.

Sources:

<http://money.cnn.com/2017/09/09/pf/what-to-do-equifax-hack/index.html>