

The Equifax Breach & What You Can Do

In a recently revealed breach, 143 million Americans may have had their personal information exposed.

Equifax, one of the nation's three major credit reporting agencies, reported a massive data breach lasting several months. Hackers were able to access people's names, Social Security numbers, birth dates, addresses and driver's license numbers. They also stole credit card numbers of 209,000 people and dispute documents containing personally identifying information of 182,000 people.

It's best to learn all you can about this data breach and take the proper steps toward protecting yourself against future damage. Here at Carolinas Telco Federal Credit Union we're ready to help by providing you with clear instructions on some steps you can be taking now.

1. FIND OUT IF YOUR INFORMATION WAS EXPOSED

Visit equifaxsecurity2017.com and click on the "Potential Impact" tab. Enter your last name along with the last six digits of your Social Security number to find out if you've been affected.

Since your SSN is sensitive information, complete this step only on a secure computer that uses an encrypted network connection. You'll also find easy access to frequently asked questions about the breach on the Equifax site.

2. SIGN UP FOR FREE PROTECTIVE SERVICES

All U.S. consumers are being offered a year of complimentary credit monitoring and other services through the Equifax's TrustedID product. Initially, the fine print of this service came with a catch. The terms of service agreement included an arbitration and limitation of liability clause that has since been removed.

3. PLACE A CREDIT FREEZE OR A FRAUD ALERT ON YOUR FILES

If your information has been exposed, consider placing a credit freeze on your credit bureaus. This will make it more difficult for someone to open a new account in your name, though it won't stop a thief from making charges to your existing accounts. Or, instead of a freeze, you can place a fraud alert on your files, warning creditors that you may have been victimized by identity theft. This alerts them to verify if someone seeking credit in your name is really you.

Even if your information was not exposed by the breach, it's always a good idea to monitor your credit card and financial accounts for charges you don't recognize.

4. FILE YOUR TAXES EARLY

If your SSN was accessed in the Equifax breach, it's best to file your taxes as soon as you possibly can to avoid tax theft come tax time. Also, be sure to respond immediately to any letters you receive from the IRS.

SOURCES:

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