

# Should You Worry About Credit Identity Theft?

**Yes!** Recent stories in the news have indicated that identity theft has become the most common financial crime faced by individuals today. Thieves have become more brazen and creative in their efforts to steal and use someone else's personal identity.

Credit Unions across the country continue to report a high volume of text message and phone phishing attacks against credit union members and nonmembers. Many of the individuals being targeted do not belong to the credit union whose name appears in the text message or phone call. The automated message indicates the individual's card has been de-activated and to re-activate the card he/she must enter their 16 digit card number, CVV2/CVC2, card expiration date, and/or PIN. In some cases there is no number attached to the call. Some members have fallen prey to the scam and provided their card information, which resulted in subsequent fraud.

Remember, Market USA Federal Credit Union and any organization affiliated with credit unions will never email, call or text you to request your personal information. If you have any questions, please contact our Member Service Center at 301-586-3400 or 800-914-4268.

If you receive a text message or an automated phone message requesting any personal information please report the incident to the credit union at 301-586-3400 or 800-914-4268 and the Federal Trade Commission ([www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)) and also file a complaint with the Internet Crime Complaint Center ([www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov))

## **How does credit identity theft happen?**

Thieves usually have one of two goals in mind—either they want to use a credit card number to buy merchandise (or get cash advances) or they are more elaborate and try to build a complete new “borrowing identity” to run up bills, but in your name.

## **How to protect yourself?**

You should guard the two most important pieces of information that credit thieves are most interested in—credit card numbers and Social Security numbers (SSN). With your credit card number, a thief can charge items to your account and with your Social Security number, they can start to build a “new” you and run up enormous credit card bills.

**Here are a few tips to help you avoid the trap of identity theft:**

1. Carry as few credit cards as possible and keep them secure. You should also be cautious with credit card receipts and anything with your account number on it. Guard your SSN. Never have it printed on your checks, and avoid carrying your SSN along with your other credit cards and license.
2. Always sign new credit cards immediately when you receive them.
3. Carefully review each month's credit card statement immediately. If there are transactions that appear odd, contact your financial institution as soon as possible. Most times a call to the credit card company will clear up any unknown items.
4. If there has been unauthorized use of your card, notify the credit card company immediately over the phone and in writing. Your liability will be reduced or eliminated by acting fast.
5. Always keep your Personal Identification Number (PIN) secure. Never give your PIN over the phone for any reason and dispose of ATM receipts properly.
6. Review your credit record annually. The three major credit agencies will provide a copy of your report for a minimal fee. An annual review should help disclose any unauthorized accounts and you will be able to see what lenders see when you apply for credit. Here are the phone numbers for the agencies:

- Experian 888.397.3742
- Equifax 800.997.2493
- TransUnion 800.888.4213