

Investigator Insight



What is it?	A statement you can add to your credit reports that indicates that you are vulnerable to becoming a victim or have been a victim of identity theft.	A lock on your credit files making your credit reports available only to those with whom you currently have a credit relationship and limited others.
Who can use it?	<p><i>Initial fraud alert</i>—anyone with a credit file and a concern about credit-related identity theft.</p> <p><i>Active duty alert</i>—military members on leave away from duty station or on deployment.</p> <p><i>Extended (7 year) fraud alert</i>—an identity theft victim.</p>	Available to everyone with a credit file.
When is it useful?	When you have reason to be concerned about becoming a victim of credit-related identity theft or you have been a victim of identity theft.	When you want to make your credit report unavailable to most entities that might request it for review before opening a new account.
Why is it valuable?	It should cause an application reviewer to take reasonable extra steps to verify the identity of the applicant, reducing the chance a thief will succeed in opening a new account.	It prevents a new entity from viewing your credit report or credit score. Most creditors do not extend credit without reviewing a report or score.
What else ...	<p>Mandated by federal law, there is no fee charged.</p> <p>A request made to one credit reporting agency (CRA) places the alert with all three.</p> <p>May cause a delay when applying for credit.</p>	<p>Most states set the fee charged to non-victims. Identity theft victims and certain others do not pay a fee.</p> <p>A freeze must be placed with each CRA individually and any applicable fees would be payable to each CRA.</p> <p>Requires planning. You must lift the freeze when you want your credit report to be available for review.</p>