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IDENTITY THEFT CHECKLIST

ACTION STEPS FOR RECOVERY

..... • **PREPARED BY** •

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Since 1938

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INTRODUCTION

Identity theft is a complex and evolving threat, and one that costs U.S. citizens billions of dollars annually. Without question, it is one of the most pressing challenges facing our country. Unfortunately, the problem is growing and fraudsters are always looking for new ways to steal confidential information to commit crimes. As your trusted adviser, we understand your concerns with identity theft and take every precaution to keep your personal information safe.

There are numerous types of identity theft. For example, a thief could steal a wallet and use credit cards to make illegal purchases, or obtain information to file a tax return on behalf of a taxpayer to claim an illegal refund.



Should you ever find yourself a victim of any type of identity theft, the checklist on the next two pages will be your guide. It outlines specific steps you should take to help mitigate the damage of identity theft: closing credit cards, filing a police report, filing a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, addressing matters with the IRS and more.

For tax-related identity theft matters, we are here to help, whether it's contacting the IRS to ensure your payments are properly credited to your account, helping to retrieve a refund issued to the wrong person or responding to IRS notices. Feel free to call me or any of the professionals in our office to discuss your situation and see how we can help.

Brett W. Neate, CPA, M.Tax
Partner

Combating Identity Theft – Client Checklist*

ORGANIZATION	WHAT TO DO
Credit Agencies	<p>Report the identity theft to the fraud department of one of the following reporting agencies as soon as possible. They must notify the other two agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equifax: equifax.com • Experian: experian.com • TransUnion: transunion.com <p>Request a copy of your credit report and that only the last four digits of your Social Security number be placed on the report.</p> <p>Close accounts that you think have been compromised or opened fraudulently.</p> <p>Inform the credit bureaus and the credit issuers (in writing) of any fraudulent accounts and incorrect information.</p> <p>Obtain replacement credit cards with new, secure account numbers and destroy any old cards.</p> <p>Notify those who have received your credit report in the last six months to alert them to any disputed, fraudulent or incorrect information.</p> <p>Confirm that an extended fraud alert (seven years) is placed on your credit report.</p>
Federal Trade Commission (FTC)	<p>Report the crime to the FTC to establish an Identity Theft Affidavit. Identity Theft Victim's Complaint and Affidavit.</p>
Local Police	<p>Report the crime to your local police or sheriff's department. Make sure to provide as much documented evidence as possible.</p> <p>Verify that the report lists the fraudulent accounts and keep a copy of the report.</p>
Internal Revenue Service (IRS)	<p>Contact the IRS to report tax-related identity theft. This will alert them to any claim for refund or other activity on your account. File IRS Form 14039, Identify Theft Affidavit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit (IPSU): 800.908.4490. <p>Contact your CPA with any questions.</p>
State Tax Agency	<p>Contact your state tax agency to report the theft. Some agencies may require a police report and/or the IRS affidavit.</p>
Other Agencies and Organizations	<p>U.S. mail fraud: Contact your local postal inspector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online: https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov/ • Phone: 800.275.8777 <p>Social Security number misuse – non-IRS issues:</p> <p>Check your earnings record to make sure no one is using your identification number to obtain work. Call your local Social Security Administration (SSA) office if something looks inaccurate.</p> <p>Contact the SSA Inspector General to report Social Security benefit fraud, employment fraud, or welfare fraud.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of the Inspector General • SSA fraud hotline: 800.269.0271

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Health Insurance Provider	Contact your health insurance company if your insurance card was accessed or stolen to help prevent the thief from using your insurance. Similarly, notify Medicare if your Medicare card was accessed or stolen.
Utilities and Brokers	Contact your local utility providers (gas, electric, cable, internet, cellular carrier, etc.) to ensure no new accounts are opened in your name. Similarly, let your investment or retirement account company know your identity documents were stolen so they will be alert to any suspicious activity on your account.
Debt Collectors	<p>Tell collectors that you are a victim of fraud and, therefore, not responsible for the account.</p> <p>Ask for the name of the collection company/the name of the person contacting you, the phone number and the address.</p> <p>Ask for the name and contact information for the referring credit issuer, the amount of the debt, account number and dates of the charges.</p> <p>Ask if the debt collector needs you to complete a specific fraud affidavit form or whether the FTC affidavit may be used.</p> <p>Follow up, in writing, with the debt collector and ensure that they confirm, in writing, that you do not owe the debt and that the account has been closed.</p>
What Else Can You Do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an identity theft file (keep copies of everything). • Change all your account passwords. As an extra step, consider changing your username. • In all communications with the credit bureaus, refer to the unique number assigned to your credit report. When mailing information use certified, return receipt. Be sure to save all credit reports a part of your fraud documentation file. • Review your credit report periodically. An extended fraud alert allows you to obtain two free credit reports from each of the credit reporting agencies within 12 months. • Consider requesting a security freeze. By freezing your credit reports, you can prevent issuers from accessing your credit files unless you give them permission. This prevents thieves from opening up new credit card and loan accounts. • Consider requesting a criminal background check to ensure your identity is not being used in connection with criminal activities.
<p>*This checklist provides you (our valued client) with a structured plan to resolve identity theft issues. Use it to contact the applicable agency (or agencies) and report the fraud. Should you need assistance, please contact our office. Our trained staff is available to help you resolve identity theft matters (including problems with the IRS) and proactively ensure your information is secure.</p>	

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Brett Neate joined Zinner & Co. in 2006 and was named partner of the firm in 2015. He has successfully worked with high net worth individuals and multigenerational family owned businesses with tax planning, compliance, and audit resolution in the areas of federal, state, and local taxation.

Brett has experience in many different industries including real estate, manufacturing, distribution, retail, and professional service companies. In addition to tax services, he provides business advisory services to help his clients achieve their financial goals and remain prosperous.

Brett received his Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration with an accounting emphasis from Baldwin Wallace College and his Masters of Taxation from the University of Akron.

Memberships

The American Institute of Certified Public Accounts

The Ohio Society of Certified Public Accountants

Civic and Non-profit Organizations

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The Emerging Leaders Academy - Upstream Academy Network

A BIT ABOUT US...

In 1938, Harry Zinner had a vision for long term success. He founded a Cleveland-based bookkeeping firm that focused on integrity, commitment, and a pledge to help individuals, not-for-profit organizations and closely-held companies grow and prosper, not just for today, but for decades to follow.

Today, Zinner & Co. provides tax, accounting and management advisory services to guide businesses from startup to succession planning and help individuals create a solid financial foundation.

Our Beachwood, Ohio office is home to a dedicated team of CPAs and management advisors that provide a full slate of services beyond traditional tax and accounting. Contact us to discover how we can help you achieve your greatest financial potential.

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