

# GOELZER

INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

## INFORMATION SECURITY

# *What to Do If You Are a Victim of Identity Theft*

Identity theft is a serious crime that can have long-lasting effects on your financial and personal life. If you suspect or have confirmed that you are a victim of identity theft, it is critical that you take immediate action to minimize the damage and start the recovery process.

We have prepared this Fact Sheet to address the kinds of steps to consider taking, including whether to consider hiring a professional who specializes in assisting victims of identity theft to assist you through the process.

### *Report Identity Theft*

The first step is to contact the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). You can do this online at [IdentityTheft.gov](http://IdentityTheft.gov) or by calling (877) 438-4338. The FTC will guide you through the recovery process and help you create a personalized recovery plan. This is an essential step in documenting the theft and beginning the process of reclaiming your identity.

### *Notify Credit Reporting Agencies, Review Your Credit Reports, & Freeze Your Credit*

Next, contact each of the three major credit reporting agencies: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. Obtain a copy of your credit reports from these three major credit reporting agencies and carefully review them for any unauthorized accounts or transactions. This will help you identify the extent of the identity theft and provide a basis for disputing fraudulent activities.

If you notice any fraudulent charges that you need to dispute, provide them with a copy of your FTC identity theft report and police report to support

your claim. Promptly addressing these issues can help prevent further damage to your credit.

You should consider placing a fraud alert and a credit freeze on your credit reports. A fraud alert warns creditors to take additional verification steps before opening new accounts in your name. A credit freeze goes further by restricting access to your credit report, making it difficult for thieves to open new accounts in your name. You can lift the freeze temporarily or permanently when needed.

### *File a Police Report*

Report the identity theft to your local police department. This will help you document the crime and may be required by some creditors and financial institutions as part of their fraud investigation process. Having an official police report can also be beneficial when disputing fraudulent charges and accounts. If the police do not file a report, ask if they can provide an incident reference number.

### *Monitor & Secure Your Accounts*

Keep a close eye on your bank and credit card statements for any unauthorized transactions. If you notice anything suspicious, report it to your financial institution right away.

Contact your financial institutions to place fraud alerts and a credit freeze on your accounts. This will prevent new accounts from being opened in your name without your permission. This includes banks, mortgages, loan companies, credit cards, and other financial institutions on your credit report.



### *Update Your Passwords & Enable Multi-Factor Authentication*

You should update the passwords for your online accounts, especially those related to banking and financial services. If you have been hacked, the bad actor may be able to access your email and send out fraudulent emails. So, it is best to update your email password too and review your sent and deleted mail. Use unique passwords for each account. Passwords should be complex, which means they have a combination of uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols. Microsoft suggests passwords be at least twelve characters long, but longer passwords are even more secure.<sup>1</sup>

Many online applications, like email, allow you to add an extra layer of security to your accounts by enabling Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA). Enabling MFA can help protect your accounts from unauthorized access. The U.S. Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency states that users who enable MFA are significantly less likely to have their accounts hacked.<sup>2</sup> Even if a bad actor compromises your password, they should not be able to satisfy the second authentication requirement, stopping them from gaining access to your accounts.

### *Contact Your Financial Advisor*

You should also inform your financial advisor that your identity has been compromised. They should flag your accounts for further scrutiny and contact the custodian to ensure additional protective measures are in place. Goelzer's advisors and client service associates will contact the custodian of your accounts and assist you through this difficult time.

### *Concierge Services for Victims of Identity Theft*

Individuals with higher levels of income may be better served by experienced IT security and identity theft professionals. A concierge service for victims of identity theft is a specialized support service designed to help individuals recover from identity theft. LifeLock or Blackcloak, for example, offer these services. These companies typically provide personalized assistance from experts who guide victims through the recovery process.

Here are some key features of such services:

- 1. Dedicated Case Manager:** Victims are assigned a dedicated case manager who helps them create a personalized recovery plan and guides them through each step of the process. This includes disputing fraudulent charges, restoring credit, and reclaiming financial health.
- 2. Comprehensive Support:** The service handles all aspects of identity restoration, including contacting credit bureaus, financial institutions, and other relevant entities to resolve issues caused by identity theft.
- 3. Insurance Coverage:** Many concierge services offer identity theft insurance, which covers stolen funds, court costs, attorneys' fees, and other losses and costs. This can provide significant financial relief to victims.
- 4. Ongoing Monitoring:** These services often include ongoing credit monitoring to help prevent future incidents of identity theft and ensure that any new fraudulent activity is detected and addressed properly.

### *Insurance Coverage*

Check with your insurance provider, as some homeowners, renters, and other insurance policies offer identity theft coverage or endorsements that may help cover the costs of recovery.

### *Conclusion*

Taking these steps can help you protect yourself and minimize the impact of identity theft. It is important to act quickly and stay vigilant to prevent further harm. Your proactive efforts will go a long way towards restoring your peace of mind and financial security.

<sup>1</sup> "Create and Use Strong Passwords," Microsoft, [support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/create-and-use-strong-passwords-c5cebb49-8c53-4f5e-2bc4-fe357ca048eb](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/create-and-use-strong-passwords-c5cebb49-8c53-4f5e-2bc4-fe357ca048eb).

<sup>2</sup> "More than a Password," U.S. Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, [www.cisa.gov/mfa](https://www.cisa.gov/mfa).

