

Notification of Rights for Ohio Consumers

You may obtain a security freeze on your credit report to protect your privacy and ensure that credit is not granted in your name without your knowledge. You have a right to place a "security freeze" on your credit report pursuant to Ohio law. The security freeze will prohibit a consumer credit reporting agency from releasing any information in your credit report without your express authorization or approval. The security freeze is designed to prevent credit, loans, and services from being approved in your name without your consent. When you place a security freeze on your credit report, within five business days you will be provided a personal identification number or password to use if you choose to remove the security freeze on your credit report or to temporarily authorize the release of your credit report for a specific party or parties or for a specific period of time after the security freeze is in place. To provide that authorization, you must contact the consumer credit reporting agency and provide all of the following:

- (a) Information generally considered sufficient to identify the consumer;
- (b) The unique personal identification number or password provided by the consumer credit reporting agency;
- (c) The proper information regarding the third party who is to receive the consumer credit report or the time period for which the credit report shall be available to users of the credit report.

A consumer credit reporting agency that receives a request from a consumer to temporarily lift a security freeze on a credit report shall comply with the request not later than fifteen minutes after receiving the request.

A security freeze does not apply to circumstances in which you have an existing account relationship and a copy of your report is requested by your existing creditor or its agents or affiliates for certain types of account review, collection, fraud control, or similar activities.

If you are actively seeking credit, you should understand that the procedures involved in lifting a security freeze may slow your own applications for credit. You should plan ahead and lift a freeze, either completely if you are shopping around, or specifically for a certain creditor, a few days before actually applying for new credit.

OHIO SECURITY FREEZE INFORMATION

Effective September 1, 2008, Ohio law requires consumer reporting agencies to offer consumers the opportunity to get a security freeze. Consumers can request a security freeze by writing or contacting all three major consumer reporting agencies using whichever methods they approve.

Under Ohio law, the consumer reporting agency is not allowed to charge any fees to victims of identity theft for placing a security freeze on a credit report. To prove you are a victim, you must also send a valid copy of a police report documenting your identity theft complaint.

Otherwise, you must pay a charge of \$5 for each placement, temporary lift, or removal of a security freeze. If you lose your PIN, you may be charged \$5 for a replacement. Identity theft victims may still be charged for temporary lifts, removals, or PIN replacements. A security freeze prohibits, with certain specific exceptions, the consumer reporting agency from releasing the consumer's credit report or any information from it without the express authorization of the consumer.

To obtain more detailed information on how to place a security freeze on your credit reports, see below.

HOW TO "FREEZE" YOUR CREDIT FILES

A security freeze means that your file cannot be shared with potential creditors. A security freeze can help prevent identity theft. Most businesses will not open credit accounts without first checking a consumer's credit history. If your credit files are frozen, even someone who has your name and Social Security number probably would not be able to obtain credit in your name.

How do I place a security freeze? To place a freeze in Ohio, you must write to each of the three major consumer reporting agencies. There is a \$5 fee to place a security freeze. There will be no fee if you provide proof that you are a victim of identity theft.

Write to all three addresses below and include the information that follows:

Equifax Security Freeze
P.O. Box 105788
Atlanta, GA 30348

Experian Security Freeze
P.O. Box 9554
Allen, TX 75013

TransUnion Security Freeze
P O Box 2000
Chester, PA 19016

For each, you must:

- Send a letter by certified mail, or by other methods allowed by the consumer reporting agencies;
- If you are a victim of identity theft, you must include a copy of your police report concerning identity theft;
- Provide your full name (including middle initial as well as Jr., Sr., II, III, etc.)

- Provide any name you previously used;
- Provide current and recent full addresses, including street address, apartment number, city, state and zip code;
- Provide your Social Security number;
- Provide your date of birth.
- Send a photocopy of a government issued identification card (state driver's license or ID card, military identification, etc.)
- If applicable, include payment by check, money order or credit card (Visa, Master Card, American Express or Discover cards only.)

How long does it take for a security freeze to go into effect? The consumer reporting agency must place the freeze within three (3) business days and send you a confirmation letter with PIN or password within five (5) business days. Keep this PIN or password in a safe place. Under the new Ohio law, there is a \$5 replacement fee for a lost PIN or password.

Can I open new credit accounts if my files are frozen? Yes. You can have a security freeze lifted for a temporary period of time. There is a \$5 charge for either temporarily lifting the security freeze or allowing a specific creditor to access your credit report. The steps to do so are as follows:

- Contact the consumer reporting agencies above.
- The manner by which you contact them is determined by them, but it may be by way of mail, telephone, fax, or an electronic method;
- You must provide proper identification;
- You must provide your unique PIN or password;
- You must include during what time period your credit report will be accessible (for example August 1 to August 5,) or include which party you want the security freeze lifted (for example: Sears.)

How long does it take for a security freeze to be lifted? Credit bureaus must lift a freeze no later than three (3) business days from receiving your request. However, a credit bureau must temporarily lift a security freeze under reasonable circumstances within fifteen (15) minutes if the request is received via the electronic method selected by the agency between normal business hours.

What will a new creditor who requests my file see if it is frozen? A creditor will see a message or a code indicating the file is frozen.

Can a new creditor get my credit score if my file is frozen? No. A creditor who requests your file from one of the three consumer reporting agencies will only get a message or a code indicating that the file is frozen.

Can I order my own credit report if my file is frozen? Yes.

Can anyone see my credit file if it is frozen? When you have a security freeze on your credit file, certain entities still have access to it so long as they use the information for “other than credit related purposes.” For example, your report can still be released to your existing creditors or to collection agencies acting on their own behalf. They can use it to review or collect on your account. Government agencies may also have access in response to a court or administrative order, a subpoena, or a search warrant.

Do I have to freeze my file with all three credit bureaus? Yes. Different credit issuers may use different consumer reporting agencies. If you want to stop your credit file from being viewed, you must freeze it with Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion.

If more than one person in my household wants to request a security freeze, do we each have to request a separate security freeze? Yes. Because each person has an individual credit history and credit reporting file, each person must make a separate request to place, lift or remove a security freeze. Each person also must pay any applicable fees.

Will a freeze lower my credit score? No.

Can an employer do a background check on my credit file? Yes. There is an exemption for non-credit related use of your credit.

Does freezing my file mean that I won't receive pre-approved credit offers? No. You can stop the pre-approved credit offers by calling 888-5OPTOUT (888-567- 8688). You can also do this online at www.optoutprescreen.com. This will stop prescreened offers. It is good for five years or you can make it permanent.

What law requires security freezes? The **Ohio** security freeze law is Ohio Rev. Code sec. 1349.52.

THIS FACT SHEET IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES. IT IS NOT LEGAL ADVICE. FOR LEGAL ADVICE, YOU MUST CONSULT YOUR OWN ATTORNEY.