

MINNESOTA SECURITY FREEZE INFORMATION

Any consumer in Minnesota may place a security freeze on his or her credit report by requesting one in writing by certified mail to the credit reporting agency. The credit reporting agency is not allowed to charge a fee to victims for placing, removing for a specific time period or party, or permanently removing a security freeze on a credit report. To prove you are a victim, you must also send a valid copy of a police report or a police case number documenting identity theft. For all others, a charge of \$5 will be applied for each placing, removing or temporary lifting of a security freeze. A security freeze shall prohibit, with certain specific exceptions, the credit 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, you must write to each of the three credit bureaus. Credit bureaus charge a \$5 fee to place or remove a security freeze, unless you provide proof that you are a victim of identity theft, in which case there is no fee. A copy of your police report or a police case number documenting identity theft must be included.

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;
- If you are a victim of identity theft, you must include a copy of either the police report or case number documenting the identity theft;
- Provide your full name (including middle initial as well as Jr., Sr., II, III, etc.,) address, Social Security number, and date of birth;
- If you have moved in the past 5 years, supply the addresses where you have lived over the prior 5 years.
- Provide proof of current address such as a current utility bill or phone bill

- 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 be in effect? After three (3) business days from receiving your letter, the credit reporting agencies listed above will place a freeze providing credit reports to potential creditors. 10 business days from receiving your letter to place a freeze on your account, the credit reporting agencies will send you a confirmation letter containing a unique PIN (personal identification number) or password. Keep this PIN or password in a safe place.

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 or a specific party. This is done at no charge for victims. For non-victims, however, there is a \$5 charge. The steps to do so are as follows:

- Contact the credit reporting agencies above.
- The manner by which you contact them is determined by them, but it may be by way of telephone, fax or over the Internet or by mail;
- You must provide proper identification;
- You must provide your unique PIN or password;
- And, you must include during what time period your credit report will be accessible (for example: from August 1 to August 5,) or to whom the credit reporting agency should open up your credit to (for example: Sears.)

How long does it take for a security freeze to be lifted? Credit bureaus must lift a freeze with a goal of processing a request within 15 minutes, but no later than three (3) business days.

What will a 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 creditor get my credit score if my file is frozen? No. A creditor who requests your file from one of the three credit bureaus 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. 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.

Other creditors may also use your information to make offers of credit. 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 credit bureaus. If you want to stop your credit file from being viewed, you must freeze it with Equifax, Experian, and Trans Union.

Will a freeze lower my credit score? No.

Can an employer do a background check on my credit file? No. You would have to lift the freeze to allow a background check, just as you would to apply for credit. The process for lifting the freeze is described above.

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). Or you can do this online at www.optoutprescreen.com. This will stop most of the offers, the ones that go through the credit bureaus. It's good for five years or you can make it permanent.

What law requires security freezes? The **Minnesota** security freeze bill passed as Senate Bill 2002. It is effective August 1, 2006.

THIS FACT SHEET IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES AND SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS LEGAL ADVICE OR AS THE POLICY OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA. IF YOU WANT ADVICE ON A PARTICULAR CASE, YOU SHOULD CONSULT AN ATTORNEY OR OTHER EXPERT. THE FACT SHEET MAY BE COPIED, IF (1) THE MEANING OF THE COPIED TEXT IS NOT CHANGED OR MISREPRESENTED, (2) CREDIT IS GIVEN TO THE OFFICE OF THE MINNESOTA ATTORNEY GENERAL, AND (3) ALL COPIES ARE DISTRIBUTED FREE OF CHARGE.