

Protecting Your Credit Card Activities

Credit cards have become a preferred way of purchasing for many. They are convenient, accepted by most stores, eliminate the need to carry cash, often easier to use than a check, and they can temporarily delay when you have to pay for your purchases. Along with these benefits, comes the risk that a thief will steal your card or your card information. If that happens, the thief can then charge purchases items to your account. Here are some guidelines to protect your credit card activities:

Physically Protecting Your Credit Cards

- Only have as many cards as you need and carry as few as possible.
- Keep seldom-used cards in a safe place.
- Keep a list of your credit card numbers and issuing companies' phone numbers in a secure place.
- If you are expecting a new or re-issued credit card and do not receive it, contact the issuing company immediately.
- Activate and sign any new cards immediately when you receive them.
- If possible, get a credit card with your picture on it.

Protecting Your Credit Card Information

- Never write your PIN number on your cards.
- Never give credit card information over the phone unless you initiated the call.
- If your credit card statement does not arrive as expected, contact the issuing company to make sure that someone else did not change your address and is receiving your statements.
- When writing a check to pay your credit card bill, do not put the full credit card account number on the Memo line. Just use the last four digits.

Preventing Unauthorized Use of Your Credit Card

- Never lend your card to someone else. They could use it improperly or it could be stolen.
- Always total the receipt and draw lines through unused spaces on the receipt.
- Never sign a blank charge slip.
- When using your card, be sure to get it back and take the receipt.
- Keep all your credit card receipts and compare them to your account statement.

In Case of Problems

- If your credit card is lost, contact the issuing company immediately.
- If you believe your card was stolen, contact the police and issuing company immediately.
- If your wallet or purse is stolen, contact all your credit card issuers to report the theft.

Most card companies have a toll-free number for reporting stolen or missing cards. Some companies provide 24-hour service. By law, once you report the loss or theft, you have no further liability for unauthorized charges. In any event, your maximum liability under federal law is \$50.