

September 12, 2017

Dear Client:

As part of J.P. Cannata & Associates' ongoing efforts to help keep your personal information as safe as possible, we want to remind you to stay on the lookout for the many security threats making the rounds in cyberspace today.

Recently, we learned about a **massive Equifax breach** in which more than 143 million consumers may have had their information compromised, including:

- Social security numbers
- Dates of birth
- Addresses
- Driver's license numbers
- Credit card information (for approximately 209,000 consumers)

Due to the high potential impact of this breach, we recommend taking the following steps:

1) Determine whether you may have been affected.

Through Equifax's self-service portal (www.equifaxsecurity2017.com), you can quickly determine whether your information may have been compromised. Enter your last name and the last six digits of your social security number and you'll find out whether Equifax believes you've been affected. This process takes only a couple of minutes.

2) Enroll in credit monitoring and identity theft protection.

Equifax is now offering one free year of TrustedID Premier, its credit monitoring and identity theft protection product, to all U.S. consumers, *even if you aren't a victim*.

Once you enter your information in Equifax's self-service portal, you'll be given the option to enroll in TrustedID Premier. Click **Enroll**, and you'll be provided with an enrollment date. **Be sure to write down this date** and return to the site on or after that date.

In addition, credit monitoring services are **also offered** through **Experian** and **Transunion**, as well as independent paid services including **LifeLock** (www.lifelock.com, 800-416-0599), and included through many **credit card companies** as an added benefit to their cardholders. Check with your credit card company to see if a similar identity and credit monitoring service is available or included.

3) Be wary of e-mails that come from Equifax.

Because of the high number of victims, Equifax is notifying *only* the 209,000 consumers whose credit card information may have been affected *via postal mail*. Do not trust e-mails that appear to come from Equifax regarding the breach. Attackers are likely to take advantage of the situation and craft sophisticated phishing e-mails.

4) Monitor your accounts for suspicious activity.

Equifax's free TrustedID Premier service can help you monitor your credit—but be sure to monitor your other important accounts for any suspicious activity.

An annual free credit report is available from all three major credit processing firms (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) thanks to a 2003 law known as FACTA. Checking your own reports for any suspicious activity is a good idea and with one annual free report from each bureau, you can check your credit report on average every 4 months.

5) Consider freezing your credit.

If you determine you are one of the 143 million Americans affected by this breach, freezing your credit may be a useful tool to combat potential identity fraud. Placing a freeze on your credit restricts who is allowed to view your credit report. Auto and mortgage lenders, credit card companies, landlords, and banks may pull a credit report when you attempt to open a new account. Freezing your credit could potentially frustrate fraudsters attempting to open a fake account with a stolen identity.

To freeze your credit, visit the three credit bureaus' websites or call and ask them to freeze your credit. You will be asked to provide some of your personal information to verify and proceed. Some will collect a small fee (normally \$5-10) in order to process a freeze, dependent upon your location. You will receive a **PIN**. It is important to **write this down for future reference**.

Once a freeze is in place, only *your existing* creditors, or their debt collectors, government agencies carrying out a search warrant or subpoena, or you yourself (to monitor your credit report) will be allowed to access and see your credit report, per federal regulations.

In order to apply for or open a new account using your credit report once frozen, you will need to request your credit freeze be lifted. This is where your PIN will be needed to make sure it is indeed you requesting the freeze be lifted. In order to re-freeze your credit the same steps would be taken as above, unless you have requested a *one-time freeze lift* for a specific creditor or purpose.

For more information, visit Equifax's FAQs page regarding the incident at:
www.equifaxsecurity2017.com/frequently-asked-questions/

Additional information can be found at:

Equifax

www.equifax.com
888-202-4025

Experian

www.experian.com
888-397-3742

TransUnion

www.transunion.com
877-322-8228

Rest assured that we are always concerned about information security. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at 847-318-0700.

As always we thank you for your business and for your continued trust.

Sincerely,

Jack P. Cannata, CFP® CPA