



Lincoln Police Department

Brian Vizzusi, Interim Police Chief

**770 7th Street
Lincoln, CA 95648
(916)645-4040**

Fraud Alert - Learn How to Put a Flag on Your Credit File

NOTE: If live in California, you have to read about a new security freeze law, [California SB 168](#), that just went into effect Jan. 1, 2003. California bill SB 168 tightens access to your credit data even more by allowing you to freeze all access to your credit file. Information available at <http://www.fightidentitytheft.com/>.

Putting a fraud alert on you credit file is one of the first things you should do if you suspect someone is trying to open credit accounts in your name. It might be something you want to do, even if you don't think identity theft is an immediate threat.

Fraud alerts are not a cure-all, however. A fraud alert can be, and sometimes is ignored by creditors. If you suspect you're a victim of identity theft, or have already become a victim, fraud alerts are only a start in trying to protect your credit. You also need to pay close attention to your credit report to make sure no new credit inquiries or credit accounts are being opened.

What is a Fraud Alert?

A fraud alert is something that the major credit bureaus attach to your credit report. When you, or someone else, tries to open up a credit account by getting a new credit card, car loan, cell phone, etc., the lender should contact you by phone to verify that you really want to open a new account. If you aren't reachable by phone, the credit account shouldn't be opened.

A creditor isn't required by law to contact you, however, even if you have fraud alert in place.

How Do I Set Up a Fraud Alert?

It's pretty easy. Just contact the fraud department of one of the credit bureaus and ask them to flag your credit file for fraud. You'll probably talk to an automated voice response system and it should only take a few minutes.

Credit Bureau Fraud Departments

TransUnion

Fraud Victim Assistance Department
Phone: 800-680-7289
Fax: 714-447-6034

P.O. Box 6790
Fullerton, CA 92634-6790

Equifax

Consumer Fraud Division
Phone: 800-525-6285 or: 404-885-8000
Fax: 770-375-2821

P.O. Box 740241
Atlanta, GA 30374-0241

Experian

Experian's National Consumer Assistance
Phone: 888-397-3742

P.O. Box 2104
Allen, TX 75013

What Happens When I Activate a Fraud Alert?

- Within 24 hours, an alert will be placed on your credit file at all three major credit bureaus. They now share data so when you call one of the bureaus, your alert request is sent to the other bureaus automatically.
- Your name will be removed from all pre-approved credit and insurance offers for two years.
- You will be sent a credit report from each of the three major credit bureaus by mail. Expect 1 - 2 weeks for delivery.

The fraud alert will remain in place for 3 months (Experian), 6 months (Equifax), 12 months (TransUnion). When the time runs out, you'll need to reactivate the alert. You can also apply for a 7-year victim statement that will keep the alert in place for, you guessed it, 7 years. For this, you will have to provide proof that you've been a victim of fraud.

What Are the Drawbacks of a Fraud Alert?

Activating a fraud alert will cause you a problem if you're used to walking into an electronics store, signing up for their amazing "don't pay anything until 2009" credit offer, and walking out of the store with a new big-screen TV. With a fraud alert active, you have to be available at either your work phone or home phone to approve opening the credit account. No big deal. It will just require a short delay in your instant gratification and a call-back to the credit company authorizing the new account.

If you can live with that, putting a fraud alert on your credit will help protect you in some situations.

On the plus side, a fraud alert won't cause any problems with using your credit card or checking accounts. It's focused on new credit accounts, not the ones you already have opened.

You can place a Fraud Alert on your credit report at any time, however, the fees are only waived if you are a victim of identity theft and provide the reporting agency with a valid police report; or

You provide a DMV investigation report that alleges a violation of PC 530.5.

Background on Fraud Alert

If you are a resident of California, you have the right as of January 1, 2003 to place a security freeze (Fraud Alert) on your credit report. A Security Freeze will prevent access to your credit report, allowing you to control which companies may see your credit report. However, there are certain exemptions to the Security Freeze that allows companies to view your credit report even though it is frozen.

Reference the below web page for more information:

<http://www.fightidentitytheft.com/>