

FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer & Business Education

Getting Purse-onal: What To Do If Your Wallet or Purse Is Stolen

A lost or stolen wallet or purse is a gold mine of information for an identity thief. Identity thieves can use information found in your wallet or purse – from credit cards, checks, your Social Security card, or even health insurance cards – to establish new accounts in your name, creating an identity crisis that can take months for you to detect, and even longer to unravel.

If your wallet or purse is lost or stolen, the Federal Trade Commission, the nation’s consumer protection agency, suggests that you take the following actions as soon as possible, and keep records of your conversations and copies of all correspondence.

- File a report with the police immediately. Get a copy of the report or at the very least, the number of the report, in case your bank, credit card company or insurance company needs proof of the crime.
- Cancel each credit and charge card that was in your wallet or purse. When you open new accounts, place passwords on them. Avoid using your mother’s maiden name, your birth date, the last four digits of your Social Security number (SSN) or your phone number, or a series of consecutive numbers.
- Call any one of the nationwide consumer reporting companies to place an “initial fraud alert” on your credit report. The alert requires creditors to follow reasonable procedures before granting credit in your name; it will stay on your credit report for at least 90 days. To place an alert on your credit report, you must provide appropriate proof of your identity: that may include your SSN, name, address, and other personal information the consumer reporting company requests. The consumer reporting company you call will contact the other two, which then will place an alert on their versions of your report.
 - Equifax: 1-800-525-6285; www.equifax.com
 - Experian: 1-888-EXPERIAN (397-3742); www.experian.com
 - TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289; www.transunion.com

When a business sees the alert on your credit report, they must verify your identity before issuing you credit. As part of this verification process, the business may try to contact you directly. This may cause some delays if you’re trying to obtain credit. To compensate for possible delays, you may wish to include a cell phone number, where you can be reached easily, in your alert. Remember to keep all contact information in your alert current.

- Ask the consumer reporting companies for copies of your credit reports. When you place an initial fraud alert on your credit report, you’re entitled to one free copy of your credit report from each of the three nationwide consumer reporting companies. Review your reports carefully to make sure no additional fraudulent accounts have been opened in your name or

unauthorized changes made to your existing accounts. In a few months, review new copies of your reports to verify any corrections and changes, and to make sure no fraudulent activity has occurred.

- Report the loss or theft to your bank if your wallet or purse contained bank account information, including account numbers, ATM cards, or checks. Cancel checking and savings accounts, and open new ones. Stop payments on outstanding checks, and ask your bank to notify the check verification service with which it does business. That way, retailers can be notified not to accept checks written on your old account.
- Get a new ATM card, account number, and Personal Identification Number (PIN) or password.
- Contact the agency that issued your driver's license or other identification document. Follow its procedures to cancel the document and replace it. Ask the agency to flag your file so that no one else can get a license or any other identification document from them in your name. If your state uses your SSN as your driver's license number, ask to substitute another number.
- Change the locks on your home and car if your keys were taken. Don't give a thief access to even more personal property and information.

If you've been a victim of identity theft, file a complaint with the FTC online at www.consumer.gov/idtheft, by phone at 1-877-IDTHEFT (438-4338); TTY: 1-866-653-4261; or by mail: Identity Theft Clearinghouse, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580. Ask for a copy of *Take Charge: Fighting Back Against Identity Theft*, the FTC's free comprehensive consumer guide to help you recover from identity theft.

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit ftc.gov or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft, and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION	ftc.gov
1-877-FTC-HELP	FOR THE CONSUMER