

# Simple Steps to Safeguard Your Identity

Up to 500,000 individuals are victims each year of identity theft, a fast-growing form of fraud. Fortunately, a few simple steps can help ensure you stay out of these statistics.

"Identity theft" or "account takeover fraud" involves criminals stealing a person's personal information. The crooks assume a person's identity, apply for credit in his or her name, run up huge bills, stiff creditors and generally wreck the victim's credit record.

At Virginia Savings Bank FSB, we put a combination of safeguards in place to protect customers, including employee training, rigorous security standards, data encryption and fraud detection. You can take these steps to avoid becoming a victim:

1. Don't give your Social Security or account numbers to anyone over the phone unless you initiated the call.
2. Tear up receipts, old bank statements and unused credit card offers before throwing them away. Crooks could steal information from your trash and use it to get credit in your name.
3. Review your bank and credit card statements as soon as you receive them to check for unauthorized transactions.
4. Protect your PINs and computer passwords; use a combination of letters and numbers and change them often. Never carry this information with you!
5. Order copies of your credit report once a year to ensure accuracy. Call any of the three national credit reporting agencies: Trans Union (800) 680-7289, Experian (888) 397-3742 and Equifax (800) 525-6285.
6. Report any suspected fraud to your bank and credit card issuers immediately so they can start to close accounts and clear your name right away. You may also contact the FTC's ID Theft Consumer Response Center toll-free at (877) IDTHEFT.

By law you are only liable for the first \$50 of unauthorized charges against a credit card account. Still, restoring your identity can be a tremendous inconvenience. It's worth your while to exercise a little preventive maintenance. Protect yourself against this terrible crime.