

FTC Consumer Alert

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

Getting Purse-onal

Psst... Want to know a secret? A lost or stolen wallet or purse is a gold mine of information for a new kind of crook — the identity thief.

Identity thieves can use information found in your wallet or purse — from credit cards, checks, your Social Security card, even health insurance cards — to establish new accounts in your name. That could create an identity crisis that can take months to detect, and even longer to unravel.

If your wallet or purse is lost or stolen, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) suggests that you:

- File a report with the police immediately. Get a copy in case your bank, credit card company or insurance company needs proof of the crime.
- Cancel each credit and charge card. Get new cards with new account numbers.
- Call the fraud departments of the major credit reporting agencies: Equifax (800) 525-6285; Experian (888) 397-3742; TransUnion (800) 680-7289. Ask them to put a “fraud alert” on your account and add a “victim’s statement” to your file requesting that creditors contact you before opening new accounts in your name.
- Ask the credit bureaus for copies of your credit reports. 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, order new copies of your reports to verify your corrections and changes, and to make sure no new fraudulent activity has occurred.
- Report the loss 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.
- Get a new ATM card, account number and Personal Identification Number (PIN) or password.
- Report your missing driver’s license to the department of motor vehicles. If your state uses your Social Security number 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 an identity thief access to even more personal property and information.

If you’ve been a victim of identity theft, file a complaint with the FTC by contacting the FTC’s Identity Theft Hotline by telephone: toll-free 1-877-IDTHEFT (438-4338); TDD: 202-326-2502; by mail: Identity Theft Clearinghouse, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580; or online: www.consumer.gov/idtheft. Ask for a copy of **ID Theft: When Bad Things Happen to Your Good Name**, a free comprehensive consumer guide to help you guard against and recover from identity theft.