

Credit Freeze

Colorado
Bureau of
Investigation
Identity Theft
& Fraud
Unit

24 HOUR
IDENTITY THEFT
& FRAUD
HOTLINE
1-855-443-3489
(TOLL FREE)

VICTIM
ADVOCATE
303-239-4649



How To Place a Freeze on Your Credit

Placing a freeze on your credit is a simple way to minimize the risk of Identity Theft. There are many positive things about placing a freeze, but there are also some draw backs. Consider the following then check out the “How To Place a Freeze” information attached, provided by the Colorado Bar Association.

- ◆ A credit freeze effects only new attempts to open credit. It will not impact your existing credit accounts. You will still be able to use your existing credit. An ID thief who has your credit card information will also be able to use your existing credit—even with a freeze in place
- ◆ If you are job hunting or looking for a loan, an apartment or a mortgage, a credit freeze could cause problems for you
- ◆ Not all creditors contact the Credit Reporting Agencies before issuing credit. Hospitals, car lots, Rent-to-Own businesses, and many local retailers offer credit without checking your credit report. A freeze will not stop someone from obtaining credit from one of these sources in your name
- ◆ Credit freezes do stop a lot of fraudulent activity and prevent many new accounts from being open in your name, and are a good tool if you have been an ID theft victim

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- ◆ Credit reporting agencies offer many options associated with a credit freeze; including some options to immediately notify you if someone attempts to open credit in your name , creating a password to access your credit, and protection from new credit accounts and pre-approved credit card solicitations
- ◆ The decision to place a credit freeze requires some thought. It is helpful to discuss it with your financial advisor or banker or with a victim advocate
- ◆ **Remember!** You do not have to go through this process alone. Victim Advocates are available to support you and help you navigate the many agencies involved

LEARN more about reporting and staying safe from scams
and responding to ID Theft by contacting the

Colorado Bureau of Investigation Victim Advocate

303-239-4649

hazel.heckers@state.co.us

24 Hour Identity Theft & Fraud Hotline

1-855-443-3489

SECURITY FREEZE INFORMATION

Any consumer in Colorado may place a security freeze on his or her credit report by requesting it in writing by certified mail to the consumer reporting agency. The consumer reporting agency is not allowed to charge a fee for placing a security freeze the first time, but a later request may cost \$10. However, for each temporary lifting for a period of time or for permanent removal there is a \$10 fee. There is a \$12 fee for lifting the security freeze on a specific party. A security freeze prohibits, with certain specific exceptions, the consumer reporting agency from releasing the consumer's credit report or any information from it without the express authorization of the consumer. The freeze goes into effect five (5) business days from receipt of the consumer's letter by the consumer reporting agency.

To obtain more detailed information on how to place a security freeze on your credit reports, see below.

HOW TO "FREEZE" YOUR CREDIT FILES

A security freeze means that the contents of or derived from a credit file cannot be shared with potential creditors. This can help prevent new account identity theft. Most businesses will not open credit accounts without first checking a consumer's credit history. If your credit files are frozen, even someone who has your name and Social Security number probably would not be able to obtain credit in your name.

How do I place a security freeze?

To place a freeze, you must write to each of the three consumer reporting agencies. (The first security freeze is free, but a subsequent freeze request will cost you \$10.)

Write to all three addresses below and include the information that follows:

Equifax Security Freeze

P.O. Box 105788
Atlanta, GA 30348

Experian Security Freeze

P.O. Box 9554
Allen, TX 75013

Trans Union Security Freeze

P.O. Box 2000
Chester, PA 19022-2000

For each, you must:

- Send a letter by certified mail;
- Provide your full name (including middle initial as well as Jr., Sr., II, III, etc.,) address, Social Security number, and date of birth;
- If you have moved in the past 5 years, supply the addresses where you have lived over the prior 5 years.
- Provide proof of current address such as a current utility bill or phone bill
- Send a photocopy of a government issued identification card (state driver's license or ID

card, military identification, etc.)

- If this is not your first freeze, provide payment by check, money order or credit card (Visa, Master Card, American Express or Discover only.)

How long does it take for a security freeze to go into effect?

After five (5) business days from receiving your letter, the consumer reporting agencies listed above will place a freeze providing credit reports to potential creditors.

After ten (10) business days from receiving your letter to place a freeze on your account, the consumer reporting agencies will send you a confirmation letter containing a unique PIN (personal identification number) or password. Keep this PIN or password in a safe place because you will use it to identify yourself to the Consumer Credit Agencies.

Can I open new credit accounts if my files are frozen?

Yes. You can have a security freeze lifted, either for a temporary period of time, or for a specific creditor. There is a \$10 charge for temporarily or permanently lifting the security freeze or a \$12 charge for allowing a specific creditor to access your credit report. The steps to do so are as follows:

- Contact the consumer reporting agencies above.
- The manner by which you contact them is determined by them, but it may be by way of telephone, fax or over the Internet.
- You must provide proper identification;
- You must provide your unique PIN or password;
- And, if you are requesting to open your credit to a third party or for a specific period of time, you must provide to whom or during what time period your credit report will be accessible.

How long does it take for a security freeze to be lifted?

Consumer reporting agencies must lift a freeze no later than three (3) business days from receiving your request.

What will a new creditor who requests my file see if it is frozen?

A creditor will see a message or a code indicating the file is frozen.

Can a new creditor get my credit score if my file is frozen?

No. A creditor who requests your file from one of the three consumer reporting agencies will only get a message or a code indicating that the file is frozen.

Can I order my own credit report if my file is frozen?

Yes.

Can anyone see my credit file if it is frozen?

When you have a security freeze on your credit file, certain entities still have access to it. Your report can still be released to your existing creditors or to collection agencies acting on their own

behalf. They can use it to review or collect on your account. Other creditors may also use your information to make offers of credit. Government agencies may have access for collecting child support payments or taxes or for investigating Medicaid fraud. Government agencies may also have access in response to a court or administrative order, a subpoena, or a search warrant.

Do I have to freeze my file with all three consumer reporting agencies?

Yes. Different credit issuers may use different consumer reporting agencies. If you want to stop your credit file from being viewed, you must freeze it with Equifax, Experian, and Trans Union.

If more than one person in my household wants to request a security freeze, do we each have to request a separate security freeze?

Yes. Because each person has an individual credit history and credit reporting file, each person must make a separate request to place, lift or remove a security freeze. Each person also must pay any applicable fees.

Will a freeze lower my credit score?

No.

Can an employer do a background check on my credit file?

No. You would have to lift the freeze to allow a background check, just as you would to apply for credit. The process for lifting the freeze is described above.

Does freezing my file mean that I won't receive pre-approved credit offers?

No. You can stop the pre-approved credit offers by calling 888-5OPTOUT (888-567-8688). Or you can do this online at www.optoutprescreen.com. This will stop most of the offers, the ones that go through the consumer reporting agencies. It's good for five years or you can make it permanent.

What law requires security freezes?

The law on security freezes in Colorado is in the Colorado Revised Statutes 12-14.3-102, passed in 2006.

THIS FACT SHEET IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES. IT IS NOT LEGAL ADVICE. FOR LEGAL ADVICE, YOU MUST CONSULT YOUR OWN ATTORNEY.

Before using these template letters, please read the entire document for complete information.

SAMPLE FREEZE LETTER TO EQUIFAX

Date

Equifax Security Freeze

P.O. Box 105788

Atlanta, GA 30348

Dear Equifax:

I would like to place a security freeze on my credit file.

My name is: My former name was (if applies):

My current address is:

My address has changed in the past 5 years. My former address was:

My social security number is:

My date of birth is:

I have included photocopies of a government issued identity card AND proof of residence such as a utility bill or phone bill.

Yours truly,

Your name

SAMPLE FREEZE LETTER TO TRANS UNION

Date

Trans Union Security Freeze
P.O. Box 2000
Chester, PA 19022-2000

Dear Trans Union:

I would like to place a security freeze on my credit file. My name is:

My former name was (if applies):

My current address is:

My address has changed in the past 5 years. My former address was:

My social security number is:

My date of birth is:

I have included photocopies of a government issued identity card AND proof of residence such as a utility bill or phone bill.

Yours truly,

Your name

SAMPLE FREEZE LETTER TO EXPERIAN

Date

Experian Security Freeze
P.O. Box 9554
Allen, TX 75013

Dear Experian:

I would like to place a security freeze on my credit file.

My name is:

My former name was (if applies):

My current address is:

My address has changed in the past 5 years. My former address was:

My social security number is:

My date of birth is:

I have included photocopies of a government issued identity card AND proof of residence such as a utility bill or phone bill.

Yours truly,

Your name