

## Credit Freeze / Security Freeze

Perhaps the single best way to protect against an identity thief opening a new credit account in your name is to place a credit freeze on your credit files with all three major credit bureaus. Credit freezes are often called security freezes by the three major credit bureaus.

By placing a credit freeze on your credit files at all three major credit bureaus, you maintain control over who can access your credit report and when, thereby blocking identity thieves from using your name and credit to open fraudulent credit accounts and harming you and your credit profile.

Through a combination of state laws and voluntary programs in place at all three major credit bureaus, anyone can place a credit freeze on their credit files. But remember, you must place the credit freeze at each of the three major credit bureaus individually.

When you place a credit freeze on your credit files, you will either select or be provided a password or PIN (personal identification number) so that you can temporarily remove the credit freeze when you want to add a new credit account to your credit file. Be sure to maintain this password or PIN in a secure location so that it will be available when you need to temporarily lift the credit freeze.

Depending on the state you reside in and whether or not you have been a victim of identity theft, there may be a fee for initiating a credit freeze and for lifting the freeze when you need to grant access to your credit report to a potential creditor.

The three major credit bureaus are Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. To learn more about placing a credit freeze (also called security freezes) with each of the three major credit bureaus please click on each of the following links:

[Equifax Security Freeze](#)

[Experian Security Freeze](#)

[TransUnion Security Freeze](#)

The combination of large and small [security breaches](#) have statistically put all Americans personal identifiable information at risk. With the digitization of medical records security breaches will become even more common and raise the odds each individual's risk of becoming an identity theft victim.

While everyone should consider placing a credit freeze on their credit files maintained by all three of the major credit bureaus, it is especially important that seniors, those responsible for incapacitated seniors and parents of children give extra consideration to initiating credit freezes.

Identity thieves specifically target children and seniors as they are much less likely to monitor their credit files and are also less likely to detect if a fraudulent account has been opened in their name. This is because children and seniors do not typically open new credit accounts and therefore have little need to check their credit reports.