

## **Equifax Data Breach: What to Do**

The Equifax consumer reporting agency experienced data breach incidents on September 7<sup>th</sup> and October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Equifax created a website to allow consumers to determine whether their personal information is affected by the security breach and one year of free credit monitoring, regardless if your information was personally impacted:

<https://www.equifaxsecurity2017.com/>

### **Credit Freeze:**

- If your personal information was impacted, the FTC (Federal Trade Commission) recommends that you place a freeze on all three credit reports.

The FTC Website provides the instructions on how to place a freeze on your credit report(s): <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0497-credit-freeze-faqs>

A credit freeze prevents anyone from opening a new account in your name until you lift the credit freeze temporarily. However, credit bureaus may charge a fee to place and suspend a credit freeze.

### **Credit Fraud Alert:**

If you decide against placing a credit freeze on your credit reports, consider placing a fraud alert instead. There is no charge for a fraud alert and it is good for ninety days.

To avoid expiration, set a reminder to yourself to update the fraud alert every quarter. A fraud alert will require financial institutions to take extra steps to verify your identity before creating new accounts.

The FTC Website also provides the instructions on how to place an initial fraud alert on your credit report(s): <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0275-place-fraud-alert>

### **Financial Aid Implications of a credit report freeze:**

- If you decide to place a freeze on all three of your credit reports, you will have to temporarily lift the freeze before applying for a Federal Direct Grad Plus loan. (If

you only have a freeze on your Equifax, Federal Student Aid can still make the credit determination from the other two credit bureaus).

- When completing your 2018-2019 Free Application for Federal Student Aid, we suggest that you use the IRS Data Retrieval tool (IRS DRT) to import your 2016 income information.
- If your 2018-2019 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is selected for verification (limited instances for Graduate Students) and you do not use the IRS DRT, you will not be able to request a 2016 tax return transcript from the IRS until the freeze is lifted from Equifax. You would have to request that the tax return transcript be mailed to you from the IRS.

**Credit Report Check :**

- As a good rule of thumb, you should periodically check your credit report for any discrepancies/inaccuracies at: [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)