

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 use your credit card and checking accounts 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 is lost or stolen, the Federal Trade Commission 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.
- Report missing cards to the major credit reporting agencies:
 - Equifax -- (800) 525-6285
 - TRW -- (800) 680-7289
 - Trans Union -- (800) 422-4879
- Report the loss to your bank. Cancel checking and savings accounts and open new ones. Stop payments on outstanding checks.
- Get a new ATM card, account number and PIN or password.
- Call your utilities, including your telephone company. Tell them that someone may try to get new service using your identification.
- Report your missing driver's license to the department of motor vehicles. Get a new number that's not your social security number.
- Change the locks on your home and car if the keys were taken. Don't give an identity thief access to even more personal property and information.

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