



IDENTITY THEFT MITIGATION AT A GLANCE

A PRODUCT OF THE NYS CONSUMER PROTECTION BOARD'S IDENTITY THEFT PREVENTION AND MITIGATION PROGRAM

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FRAUD ALERT AND A SECURITY FREEZE?

	FRAUD ALERT¹	SECURITY FREEZE²
How do I place a fraud alert/security freeze?	<p><u>Initial alert</u>: Contact the credit bureau over the phone, via its website, or via mail.</p> <p><u>Extended alert</u>: write one of the credit bureaus and provide a valid police report.</p>	Write each credit bureau. They must accept requests via mail (return receipt requested), telephone, or secure electronic means.
Do I have to contact all three credit bureaus?	No. Once you place a fraud alert with one credit bureau, that bureau will contact the others.	Yes.
How long does it take for the fraud alert/security freeze to become effective?	For the credit bureau that the individual consumer contacts, the fraud alert is placed immediately; the others will place the alert within 24 hours of receiving notice from the first bureau.	Credit bureaus are required to place the security freeze within three (3) business days of receiving the request. Some may place it much more quickly.
How long does a fraud alert/security freeze remain in place?	<p><u>Initial alert</u>: 90 days, renewable.</p> <p><u>Extended alert</u>: 7 years.</p> <p><u>Active Duty alert</u>: 1 year.</p>	Indefinite.

¹ 15 U.S.C. § 1681 *et seq.*

² New York General Business Law § 380-t.

	FRAUD ALERT¹	SECURITY FREEZE²
What is the cost?	Nothing.	There is no cost for the first placement of the freeze, \$5 to remove or thaw the freeze per credit bureau, per time. No fee for identity theft victims submitting either an FTC affidavit or police report, or for victims of domestic violence, according to NY law. ³
Who can see my credit report?	Current creditors, employers, potential creditors, prescreeners, collection agencies, or anyone via court order.	Current creditors, government agencies, prescreeners, collection agencies, or anyone via court order.
Can I open new credit accounts?	Yes. <i>Initial alert:</i> the creditor should take steps to verify that you have authorized the request. <i>Extended alert:</i> creditors are required to verify your request for new credit by contacting you via the phone number(s) that you provide.	Yes. However, you would have to “lift” or “thaw” the freeze in order to obtain new credit, and this can take up to three (3) business days. Each of the credit bureaus will send you a PIN, and instructions on how to lift the freeze. Beginning September 2009, bureaus must accept requests to lift or thaw over the telephone or via secure electronic means, and lift the freeze within 15 minutes.
Can a creditor get my credit score?	Yes.	No.

³ *Id.*

	FRAUD ALERT¹	SECURITY FREEZE²
Can I get my own credit report for free?	<p>Yes.</p> <p><u>Initial alert:</u> Placing an initial alert entitles you to one (1) free credit report, in addition to the one (1) free credit report obtainable annually through annualcreditreport.com</p> <p><u>Extended alert:</u> Placing an extended alert entitles you to two (2) free credit reports in the 12 months following placement of the alert, in addition to the free annual credit report.</p>	<p>Yes, all consumers are entitled to one (1) free credit report from each bureau per twelve (12) month period. Reports should be obtained through annualcreditreport.com.</p>
Will placing a fraud alert or security freeze prevent an identity thief from opening a new account?	<p>Probably. The creditor is required to take reasonable steps to verify your identity before issuing credit. For extended alerts, the creditor must call your designated phone numbers to verify credit. However, a creditor could still issue credit to an identity thief.</p>	<p>Probably. A potential creditor will not be able to obtain your credit score or see any of your credit history. Under these circumstances, most creditors would not open a new account.</p>
Does this affect my receiving pre-approved or pre-screened offers?	<p><u>Initial alert:</u> No. Consumers must contact 888-5OPTOUT, or www.optoutprescreen.com to be removed from pre-screening lists.</p> <p><u>Extended alert:</u> Yes. Consumers will be removed for five (5) years from receiving pre-screened offers.</p>	<p>No. Consumers must contact 888-5OPTOUT, or www.optoutprescreen.com to be removed from pre-screening lists.</p>

	FRAUD ALERT¹	SECURITY FREEZE²
How do I remove a fraud alert/security freeze?	There are no specific mechanisms for removal.	Follow instructions of each credit bureau. Each bureau must process individual's request within three (3) business days of receipt of request. In September 2009, a bureau must release freeze within 15 minutes if request made by telephone or via secure electronic means.

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NYS CONSUMER PROTECTION BOARD

Advocating for and Empowering NY Consumers

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