

Spotlight

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Be Careful About Security Breach Emails

At least one major retailer has sent emails to millions of customers potentially affected by mega security breaches such as the one that occurred during the 2013 holiday season.

Be on the lookout for scammers who mimic them.

If you receive email from a retailer regarding a security breach, here's what to do:

Don't automatically open the email: First go to the retailer's website or call to make sure the information online matches the email you received.

If you've already opened the email don't click on any links until you verify the information with the retailer.

If you've already clicked a link to an external website and entered personal information: Verify the information in the email with the retailer at its website. Then...

If the information in the email doesn't match the retailer's information: Take action quickly:

- If the retailer is offering free fraud-monitoring, take advantage of it. Or sign up for our Benefits Plus® program and take advantage of the Benefits Plus® Identity Theft and Security Center featuring Restoration Rescue®.
- Go online and confirm your debit and credit card transactions at least once a week. Every day is better.
- Alert us and all your financial institutions and credit card companies.
- Call one of the "big three" credit reporting agencies--Equifax, TransUnion, and Experian--to tell them you clicked on a bogus link and shared information you wish you hadn't.
- Ask to have a fraud alert placed on your account. It costs nothing to place a fraud alert on your credit report if your information is compromised, and the alert will remain in place for 90 days.
- Alert the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Report fraud at FTC.gov or by calling 877-438-4338.
- If you're really worried, request a credit freeze, which prohibits any credit from being extended under your name.

To learn more about protecting your accounts from fraud, talk to the professionals at Cedar Point Federal Credit Union. We can recommend steps you can take to keep your information safe.

How To Tell If Your ID Has Been Hacked

The 2013 Identity Fraud Report from Javelin Strategy & Research, Pleasanton, Calif., revealed that almost one of four consumers who received a data breach notice became a victim of identity theft. The same study revealed that consumers who had their Social Security number compromised in a data breach were five times more likely to be a fraud victim than the average consumer.

How can you tell if your identity has been compromised?

- Surprise! You're denied. If your credit card is denied, find out why—especially if you always pay on time and haven't reached your spending limit. Don't shrug it off and assume your card will work the next time; investigate immediately.
- Unexpected increase in an account balance. This could be a sign that someone made charges in your name and went shopping, hoping to leave you with the bill.

- Unauthorized inquiries. If you see inquiries on your credit reports that you didn't initiate, that's a sign someone might be trying to open credit in your name.
- Sudden drop in credit score. An unexplained drop in your credit score is a sign someone is using your credit.
- Mysterious new account. The sooner you notice unauthorized accounts opened in your name, the faster you can shut them down.

Bottom line: Review your credit reports regularly. You can order one free credit report a year from each of the "big three" credit reporting agencies—Equifax, TransUnion, and Experian, and keep an eye on your credit score. Finally, contact one of the credit bureau fraud units about placing a fraud alert on your file. You can find more information on our web site at <http://www.cpfcu.com/Security/creditreport.html>.





A series of free seminars presented by
Cedar Point Financial Services, Inc.
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Wednesday, November 12, 2014 & Wednesday, February 11, 2015
6:00 pm

Estate Planning Basics presented by Joann Wood of The Law Office of Joann M. Wood, LLC

All seminars are free and open to the public.

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Reservations are requested.

Please call **301-863-7071** - Dora (ext 8427) or Michele (ext 8432) - or sign up online at www.cpfcu.com

Protect Your Nest Egg From Nursing Home Expenses

The United States Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 70% of Americans who reach age 65 will need long-term care for an average of three years. The average annual cost of nursing home care is about \$70,000 a year or about \$6,000 each month.

According to seniorhomes.com*, health-care plans and Medicare insurance account for only 3% of the cost of nursing home care.

Be proactive

Nest-egg savings usually are intended to finance retirement years, or to be left as an inheritance for loved ones.

It's hard to predict what health issues may arise. Even if you're relatively healthy, budgeting for long-term health expenses is imperative. The key to protecting your nest egg from nursing home costs is to take steps before the need for cares arises, according to Forbes:

- *Visit the Social Security Administration's website (ssa.gov*) to review Medicare rules.* This step also will help you determine the best time to sign up. Medicare is a federal health insurance program for people who are age 65 or older, and certain younger people with disabilities or other circumstance making them eligible.
- *Check state laws to find Medicaid coverage requirements specific to you.* Medicaid is a social health-care program for families and individuals with low income and resources.
- *Consider your state's Medicaid coverage requirements.* An eldercare attorney can help determine if Medicaid is an option for you. You will not be eligible for Medicaid unless your asset level is quite low. Your attorney may recommend what's called Medicaid asset protection—which legally protects certain assets from the high cost of nursing home care. To find a qualified lawyer, call your local bar association and find out which attorneys teach seminars about Medicaid planning. Make sure the attorney is licensed in the same state you live

in because laws vary from state to state. The National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (naela.org*), Vienna, Va., has tools to help consumers locate a lawyer near them. If you can't afford an attorney, visit lawhelp.org* to determine whether you're eligible for free legal aid.

- *Consider contributing to a health savings account if you are eligible.* An HSA account could offer a triple tax benefit:
 1. Cash contributions to HSAs are 100% deductible from your federal gross income;
 2. Interest on savings accumulates tax-deferred; and
 3. Withdrawals from an HSA for "qualified medical expenses" are free from federal income tax. See irs.gov* for qualified medical expenses.
- *Consider dividing assets between spouses.* This strategy gets tricky though; again, consult an estate planning or elder-law attorney for advice.
- *Consider purchasing long-term care insurance while you are young and healthy.* Before purchasing, check that the provider is reputable.
- *Consider making financial gifts to family members or an irrevocable trust.* Gifting is frequently an integral part of many asset protection plans. During 2014 you can give up to \$14,000 per donee without filing a federal gift tax return. So, for example, if you have three children—you can give each of them \$14,000 without any reporting requirement. Your spouse also can give each child \$14,000. Before making a financial gift, become familiar with the five-year "look-back" period. If there are transfers within this period, you could be penalized and face a delay in Medicaid eligibility.

The professionals at Cedar Point Financial Services, Inc. can assist you with your all your long term planning needs. Stop by or call today at 301-863-7071 ext. 8427 or 8432.

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