



PUBLIC SAFETY BULLETIN

Credit Card Security

EMV technology was supposed to be the golden ticket to giving you a stronger sense of security with your credit card. Well, it turns out that identity thieves are still one step ahead of the financial industry, and they're crafty enough to navigate their way around those chips. In fact, these criminals seem to be more successful than ever. A recent report from Javelin Strategy & Research revealed that identity fraud incidents set a new record. The surge was driven by a 40% increase in card-not-present fraud. Translation: Thieves are turning away from the need to insert a card in favor of the relative ease of snatching 16-digit numbers in cyberspace.

What can you do to fend off fraudsters? Besides the obvious strategies of avoiding suspicious links and steering clear of unverified websites, make sure you're taking the following steps.

1. Beware of Free Wi-Fi

Free Wi-Fi can come with a serious cost: your credit card number falling into the wrong hands. You're not the only one who enjoys getting online for free. Whether you're connecting at the local coffee shop or in a hotel lobby, those open networks are easy targets for online thieves. If you're using them, it's important to restrict yourself to low-risk activities, such as streaming music, or movies, or reading news. Do not access your bank accounts, review your credit card statements or input your credit card number to make mobile purchases. That means that even if you find the greatest deal on a flight for that vacation getaway, you should wait and find a secure connection for the purchase.

2. Regularly Review Transaction History

When you are in the safety of a secure Wi-Fi network (preferably at home), be sure to take a look at your recent transactions. Does anything look out of the ordinary? Anything you don't recognize? The sooner you catch a potentially compromised credit card, the better off you'll be. I recommend taking a look at your purchase history at least once each day. Think about it: You probably check email messages dozens of times throughout the day, so take an extra few minutes to make sure your credit card is secure.

3. Avoid a Lazy Approach to Passwords

Your passwords shouldn't be easy to remember. They should be hard to crack. I know it's not fun to manage unique 16-character passwords for every site you use online, but it's not wise to use the same password for all your accounts. The rationale is simple: If online thieves manage to uncover the data from one site, they can easily crack your other accounts, too. And if you've stored your credit card information on any of those sites, you can find yourself in serious trouble.

4. Keep Your Social Information Private

This may not seem like it has a direct impact on your credit card, but the details of your public Facebook page can make a hacker's job easier. Your birthdate, your hometown, your high school — these pieces of information may lead to cracking your password. The Javelin report found that consumers who are especially active on social media had a 46% higher risk of having their accounts taken over by online thieves. So, check your settings to make sure that only your friends can see your private details, and avoid accepting friend requests from anyone you don't recognize.

5. Take Two Steps to Make a Thing Go Right

Use two-factor authentication to add an extra layer of protection between your credit card and identity thieves. From your email account to your Amazon account to your bank account, you can enable two-step verification on a range of sites. So, if someone tries to access your account on an unrecognized device, they won't be able to get very far, and you'll receive an alert about the activity.

6. See if Your Card Comes with Extra Security

If you use a MasterCard or a Visa, you may be able to take advantage of the card's beefed-up online security features. MasterCard has an offering called Secure Code, which functions like a PIN; it's an additional code you enter each time you make a purchase online. Verified by Visa is similar, sending you a password to complete the purchase. It adds one additional step to the buying process, but it's not much of a hassle. And it's certainly better than having to cancel your card and worrying about how a hacker's crimes will impact your credit score.

Call police by dialing 911

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