

Protecting Your Money

Top Seven Tips For Protecting Your Money

by Joe Ford

(NAPSA)—In my current job as head of security for Bank of the West, and as the former Associate Deputy Director of the FBI, I hear from many friends and colleagues who have questions about how best to protect their financial information. The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that identity theft costs Americans nearly \$9 billion each year.



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Fortunately, there are simple steps every person can take to reduce the risk of fraud and identity theft. Here are my top tips:

1. Protect your PINs and Social Security number at all times, and don't select PINs that are easy to guess, such as your birthday or anniversary.

2. Don't make banking, shopping or financial transactions from public computers or WiFi hot spots. Those are not secure environments and your financial data could be stolen.

3. Keep the phone numbers of your credit and debit card issuers handy so you can quickly report cards that have been lost, stolen or compromised. Early reporting helps ensure that you won't forfeit liability protection. Also, be sure your card issuers know how to contact you if they have questions about suspicious account activity.

4. Check your account regularly for unauthorized activity if you bank online or with your mobile phone. If you receive a



A few simple steps can help protect you from fraud and identity theft.

paper statement, go over it closely so you can report any fraudulent transactions.

5. Shred your financial documents before you throw them away. Garbage cans aren't secure.

6. Do not provide personal information to anyone who calls you about your bank account or credit cards. It can be hard to distinguish between a legitimate call from your bank and a call from a fraudster. If you think the call is legitimate, politely hang up and then call back using a phone number on your bank statement or on the back of your credit card.

7. Never respond to, or click on, unsolicited e-mails regarding your bank accounts or personal financial information.

If you follow these tips, you'll be well on your way to safer banking and protecting your financial and personal data. You can get additional information about keeping your financial information secure at <https://www.bankofthewest.com/privacy-security/fraud.html>.