IDENTITY THEFT & CREDIT PROTECTION

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What is Identity Theft?

Identity theft occurs when a thief uses personal information or your Social Security Number to open a new account or get a new credit card in your name.
IDENTITY THEFT ON THE RISE
Protect Your Social Security Number

• Do not carry your SS card in wallet or purse.
• Give SSN only when absolutely necessary.
• Ask why SSN is needed, who has access to it, and how kept confidential.
• Shred old bank statements, insurance forms, credit apps, etc.
Protect Your Money

• Limit your credit cards.
• Copy credit cards (front and back) in case card is lost or stolen.
• Review billing cycles and monthly statements.
• Contact creditors if bill does not arrive or has unrecognized charges.
Protect Your Mail

- Credit card applications: (888) 5-OPT-OUT.
- Junk mail: Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Assoc., PO Box 643, Carmel, NY 10512 (www.dmaconsumers.org)
- Do not leave incoming mail sitting in unlocked mailbox.
Online Safety

- “Phishing” – Beware of e-mails that ask to confirm personal information or account numbers.
- Never send SSN or account numbers by e-mail.
- Do not transmit SSN or account numbers online unless using secure website (look for icon; https) or encryption software.
- Read privacy policies.
Too Late!

- Change account numbers (CC, Bank, etc.).
- Contact NC Attorney General (877) 5NO-SCAM (566-7226) or www.ncdoj.gov.
Credit Protection

• Track your credit history: Credit Bureaus (www.AnnualCreditReport.com).
• Used for credit eligibility/terms, renting homes, employment, etc.
• For-Profit, Non-Gov’t.
• Security Freeze?
Steps to Correct Credit Report

• Tell creditor or other information provider, **in writing**, that you dispute an item.

• Be sure to include copies (NOT originals) of documents that support your position.

• If you are correct, the information provider may not report it again.
Military Lending Act (2007)

• 36% Cap.
• Payday Loans (<91 days, <$2,000).
• Vehicle Title Loans (<181 days, secured by car).
• Tax Refund Anticipation Loans.
• DOD review of loopholes.
How to Protect Yourself

• Only borrow in cases of genuine need.
• Read and understand everything you sign – do not let the lender rush you.
• Contact military financial counselors.
• Contact Military OneSource (800) 342-9647.
Questions?
CARS

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What’s the Big Problem?

- Base Taxi Delivery.
- “AS IS” Used Cars.
- Damage Disclosure.
- Conditional Delivery.
- Auto Repair.
The Danger of “AS IS”

- Car Dealer is NOT providing warranty.
- If car breaks down after purchase, repair costs come out of your pocket.
Damage Disclosure

• If car is 5 years old or newer, seller must disclose if known damage is above 25% of vehicle’s value.

• Regardless of age of car, seller must disclose if known salvage or flood history.
How to Protect Yourself

• Always perform pre-purchase inspection.
• Check with our office and BBB to find out whether car dealer has any complaints.
• Carfax Vehicle History Reports are not 100% accurate 100% of the time, but still helpful.
• Test drive the car.
Conditional Delivery (Yo-Yo Sale)

• Dealer allows buyer to take car before financing approval.
• Dealer calls later and demands car back.
• Dealer may try to pressure buyer into signing new, higher interest rate contract.
• Dealer may try to charge for excessive mileage.
• Dealer may tell buyer that trade-in is already sold.
How to Protect Yourself

• Ask dealer whether sale is conditional delivery and have them put it in writing.
• Ask dealer about mileage charges if deal fails and have them put it in writing.
• Read and understand everything you sign – do not let dealer rush you.
• Be sure to provide accurate information.
Unwinding the Deal

• If financing cannot be obtained: (1) You return car, (2) Dealer returns down payment, and (3) Dealer returns trade-in.

• Dealer’s insurance should cover vehicle until financing is approved.
Common Misconceptions

• No **used** car Lemon Law in NC.
• No cooling-off period.
• Withholding a payment will not make dealer do anything aside from repossess your car.
Motor Vehicle Repair Act

• Repairs over $350 must have a written estimate.
• Right to estimate may be waived.
• Shop may not charge over 10% of written estimate.
• If repair will cost over 10% of estimate, shop must call to obtain permission.
• If no permission, payment is still required for repairs and services performed up to that point.
An Ounce of Prevention...

• Check with our office and BBB to find out whether shop has any complaints.
• Obtain estimates from multiple shops.
• Obtain copy of repair estimate before shop begins work.
• You get what you pay for.
Too Late!

- File “Complaint for Recovery” in county where shop is located.
- Call NC DMV License & Theft Inspector in county where shop is located.
- Consult private attorney.
- Contact NC Attorney General (877) 5NO-SCAM (566-7226) or www.ncdoj.gov.
Questions?
Consumer Protection Division

• 20,000 Complaints Annually.
• TOP TEN TOPICS (Last Year)
  10 – Telecommunications
  9 – Internet/Computers
  8 – Television Services
  7 – Home Repair
  6 – Telemarketing Fraud
  5 – Motor Vehicles
  4 – Credit and Collections
  3 – Do Not Call/Unwanted Calls
  2 – Health Care
  1 – Lending
Thank You!

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