

W I S C O N S I N

Office of Privacy Protection

Safeguarding Information for Your Future



Don't Let Identity Theft Ruin Your Vacation

Vacation should be a time of rest and relaxation, but it's also a prime opportunity for identity thieves who might take advantage of changed routines and more informal settings. To guard your identity while vacationing, here are some tips from the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, <http://www.privacyrights.org>.

Clean out your wallet. Remove unnecessary credit cards, your Social Security card, and other unneeded documents that could compromise your identity if lost or stolen while on vacation.

Photocopy or make a list of the remaining contents of your wallet. Keep it in a secure and locked location or with a trusted individual at home whom you can contact in case your wallet is lost or stolen.

Do not leave your wallet or any documents containing personal information in your hotel room unattended. Use a hotel safe when available.

Use traveler's checks or credit cards for payment and leave your checkbook in a secure locked place at home.

Use credit cards instead of debit cards. This reduces your vulnerability to having your checking account emptied while you are on vacation.

Guard your credit card receipts and car rental agreements, particularly if they contain your full credit card number.

If you plan on using an ATM card during your vacation, use one that does not have debit card privileges (for example one that requires a PIN and does not contain a Visa or MasterCard logo). You can ask your bank to change an ATM/debit card to one that is "ATM only." It's best to use ATM machines found at banks or credit unions and that are in well-lit areas.

Ask your Post Office or a trusted neighbor to hold your mail for you. Mail that is left in an unlocked mailbox is a goldmine for identity thieves.

If you are bringing your laptop with you, be very careful when using it to access online banking or other password-protected services from wi-fi networks. Be sure to use wi-fi "hotspots" that are secure.

If you are using cyber-café's or other public access Internet facilities rather than bringing your laptop with you, be aware that keyloggers (software that can track your keystrokes) may be tracking you.

If you are or think you have been the victim of identity theft, contact the Wisconsin Office of Privacy Protection at 1-800-422-7128 or online at WisconsinPrivacy@datcp.state.wi.us. For more information, visit the website at privacy.wi.gov.

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