

Consumer Information from Mid Oregon Credit Union

News Now

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Intersections Inc. advises travelers on ID theft

CHANTILLY, Va. (7/9/10)--Identify theft can ruin one's travel plans, so consumers should invest some time in basic safe data practices, says Identity Theft Assistance Center (ITAC) President Anne Wallace. ITAC is a subsidiary of Intersections, a CUNA Strategic Service provider.

About 2.3% more consumers will take vacations this year compared with 2009, according to the U.S. Travel Association. Credit unions can remind their members about the importance of guarding against identity theft.

"Being away from home increases your exposure to identity theft," said Steve Schwartz, Intersections executive vice president of consumer solutions. "[Thieves] also bank on the fact that many travelers are focused more on their itinerary than on their identity exposure."

Intersections and ITAC recommend that consumers:

- Have mail collected or held at the post office;
- Hide financial documents so they are not in plain view at home;
- Limit access to e-mail at cyber cafes or other establishments, and avoid entering any passwords to personal financial accounts on those computers;
- Avoid tweeting or blogging about travel plans;
- Install anti-virus software on laptops;
- Assume public wireless "hot spots" are not secure;
- Confirm credit card numbers in person at hotels instead of over the phone;
- Take as few credit cards as possible and keep one as a backup in a hotel safe;
- Have a copy of emergency contact numbers for credit cards and bank accounts;
- Be cautious when using ATMs and keep personal identification numbers safe;
- Use cash when possible;
- Photocopy cards and documents in wallets or purses, including credit and ATM cards. Leave the copy with someone in case a wallet or purse is stolen to make cancelling cards easier; and
- Consider using a credit and public monitoring service if traveling for an extended period.

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