

MANAGING YOUR MONEY



Many Eyes On Your Credit *Make Sure Yours Are Among Them*

(NAPSA)—If you thought applying for a mortgage, auto loan or credit card were the only reasons to keep a watchful eye on your own credit standing, think again. Increasingly, more and more businesses are using credit data as part of their assessment of you as a potential customer.

At the top of this list are insurance providers. Industry experts indicate that the vast majority of the nation's largest 100 insurers now use credit data as a factor in their insurance decisions. That means that when you apply for property or auto insurance, it's more than likely the way you've managed your finances in the past will factor into the premiums you'll be quoted today.

"Fortunately, the link between how responsible you've been with your credit over the years and the likelihood of your filing an insurance claim turns out to be good news for most people," says Lucy Duni, director of Consumer Education for TransUnion's TrueCredit.com. In fact, insurers report that approximately 70 percent of consumers benefit from the inclusion of credit information in their underwriting process.

Where else is your credit information likely to come into play? If you go to buy a new cell phone or PDA through a wireless provider, your credit will probably be checked as part of that process as well. That's because, these days, providers discount their devices based on the potential of having you as a monthly paying customer for the next one



or two years. If you turn out to be a deadbeat, the provider loses money on the deal.

If you're applying for a job, don't be surprised should your potential new employer ask for permission to undertake a screening process that includes a look at your credit. This is particularly likely if you're applying for a position where you'll be involved in financial aspects of the company.

What's a person to do? You have three credit reports. Step one is to check them all frequently to make sure you know what each contains. TransUnion's www.truecredit.com site offers unlimited access to all three reports and scores, as well as other valuable tools that can help you manage your own credit health. After that, follow these three simple tips to keep your credit in good shape:

- Pay bills on time all the time.
- Keep credit card balances low.
- Apply for new credit in moderation.

The key to healthy credit is you. Staying on top of things today can help ensure that a business checking up on your credit tomorrow will like what it sees.