

Consumer Corner

Minimizing The Risk Of Identity Theft

(NAPSA)—There's good news for consumers concerned about the threat posed by identity thieves. Increasingly, the financial services industry is looking for ways to help consumers protect themselves from identity theft.

Recent research conducted by the Better Business Bureau with Javelin Strategy & Research indicates that over nine million Americans became victims of identity theft in 2004. Experts say identity theft remains the number-one concern among consumers contacting the Federal Trade Commission.

In response to this concern, card companies are developing a number of benefits and services to help cardmembers combat identity theft. American Express, for example, cites the following:

- Identity Theft Assistance, a free benefit that provides access to representatives who are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to offer tips on identity theft prevention and to help you navigate the recovery process if you are a victim.

- Identity Protection, which provides enrolled members with coverage of up to \$15,000 to cover costs incurred as a result of identity theft. Counselors are also available to guide customers through the process of recovering their losses.

- CreditSecure®, which provides enrolled members with protection against identity theft and credit card fraud by monitoring credit profiles and notifying American Express® Cardmembers of any changes.

In addition, through the com-

"With identity theft continuing to be top of mind for consumers, it's important for people to understand how they can minimize their risk," said Peggy Maher, Senior Vice President, American Express. (T)

pany's Fraud Protection Guarantee, whenever American Express Cardmembers use the Card—online or off—they will not be held responsible for any fraudulent charges.

The following tips are also recommended to help consumers reduce their risk of identity theft:

- Do not give out your Social Security number to people or companies you do not know.

- Before disclosing personal information, make sure you know why it is required and how it will be used.

- Shred information you no longer need that contains personally identifiable information and account numbers.

"With identity theft continuing to be top of mind for consumers, it's important for people to understand how they can minimize their risk," said Peggy Maher, Senior Vice President, American Express. "Services such as Identity Theft Assistance, Identity Protection and CreditSecure are all ways that we can add value for our Cardmembers and help them feel more secure."

More information is online at www.americanexpress.com/idtheftassistance about these and other benefits and services.