

# TAX TIME

## Tax Time Is ID Theft Season; Get Your Credit Report

(NAPSA)—It's tax time again. The Federal Trade Commission notes that one-third of all ID theft complaints it receives are tax related, three times as large as any other type of ID theft. So tax season is a good time to review your personal financial records and ensure they are accurate and there are no unknown or erroneous data in them.

One record you'll want to review is your credit report. It can alert you to accounts that might have been opened by ID thieves. You are entitled to a free annual copy of your credit report from each of the three nationwide credit bureaus: Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. Just go to [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) to get your free report.

"The credit report gives consumers an excellent comprehensive overview of their outstanding credit obligations," says Stuart K. Pratt, president and CEO of the Consumer Data Industry Association. "While the lenders and credit bureaus have a number of sophisticated security protocols in place to inhibit identity theft and fraud, there can still be instances where a criminal with access to your personal information—as in the IRS data breach—can result in a problem. Monitor your financial relationships. The credit report is one of the easiest and best ways to do that," notes Pratt.

After you get your credit report, make sure all the accounts are yours. If you see one that you



**It may pay to check your credit report before you calculate your taxes.**

don't recognize or an account that has an error, contact the credit bureau. You can also contact the creditor or lender that provided the information to the credit bureau and let them know about the issue.

In a number of situations, information you provide the credit bureau will be sent to the lender. The lender will verify whether the information is correct or not and then the credit bureau will notify you of the results. If there's information that needs to be updated, the credit bureau will do so. If it's a case of identity theft, the credit bureau will work with you to remove the fraudulent information from your file and to place appropriate alerts that can help prevent fraudulent transactions from appearing on your file in the future.

Not all data breaches result in identity theft. But it's always a good practice to be a savvy consumer and check your financial records to make sure that's the case.