

Your Finances

Protect Your Credit In Your Golden Years

(NAPSA)—The majority of older Americans have excellent credit histories, which makes understanding ways to protect your “golden” credit record more important than ever.

Americans 55 and older control 70 percent of the country’s personal wealth and are the fastest growing group of new Internet users. Unfortunately, this group also accounts for 80 percent of the fraud complaints logged by the Federal Trade Commission.

Your Credit Card Companies urges older Americans to take some simple steps to better understand their credit picture, protect themselves from identity theft and credit card fraud, and practice online safety.

Here are some tips on protecting yourself from theft, fraud and cybercriminals:

- Never give personal information to a stranger, especially your Social Security number, birth date, bank account number, credit card number or address. Identity thieves can use this information to make purchases in your name.
- Reject offers from companies that require you to pay an up-front fee to get approved for a credit card.
- If you receive a credit offer you think seems questionable from unsolicited mail or a telemarketer, check with your local Better Business Bureau at www.bbb.org or the National Consumers League’s National Fraud Information Center at www.fraud.org.
- Be alert for scammers e-mailing you and asking you to



If you think you’ve been scammed, immediately contact your financial institution.

“update” private information. Requests for personal information such as a user ID, account number or password are usually fake. Legitimate companies do not request this type of information by e-mail.

- Create passwords that are easy to remember but difficult to guess. Mix letters and numbers and avoid using birthdays and Social Security numbers. Use a different password for financial-services Web sites and transactions than for other accounts.

- If you think you’ve been scammed, immediately contact your financial institution and alert any of the three credit bureaus to place a fraud alert on your credit report. You should also file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission and contact local law enforcement to alert them of the possible crime.

For more information on protecting your credit, visit www.YourCreditCardCompanies.com.