

# The News You Need to Know



Left to right: Andrew Woolley, Andrew Barninger, Christopher Miller, Steven Bell and Alan Loss.

*We have been happy to speak to a number of clients in recent days, since the revelations regarding Equifax. We suggest taking heed of the common sense precautions outlined in this newsletter, as well as exercising as much vigilance as possible when it comes to your personal information.*

## The Equifax Data Breach

*Have you been affected?*

*If so, how can you try to protect yourself?*

**On September 7, credit reporting agency Equifax dropped a consumer bombshell.** It revealed that cybercriminals had gained access to the personal information of as many as 143 million Americans between May and July – about 44% of the U.S. population. The culprits were able to retrieve roughly 209,000 credit card numbers, in addition to many Social Security and driver's license numbers.<sup>1</sup>

Equifax has set up a website for consumers to determine the impact from the breach, however, it has been reported that there have been ongoing issues with the website. The following Equifax link, <https://www.equifaxsecurity2017.com> has updated information on the issues and how Equifax is resolving them.

Another source of information is the Federal Trade Commission website: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2017/09/equifax-data-breach-what-do>

**How should you respond? Consider placing a temporary security freeze on your credit files by calling the three bureaus once every 90 days.** Doing so will make it impossible for criminals to open any new accounts in your name. There may be a small fee (\$10-\$15) to put on or take off the freeze. You will also have to take a few extra steps if you need to obtain any new credit for yourself during a credit freeze.

Equifax - 1-866-447-7559  
Experian - 1-888-397-3742  
TransUnion - 1-888-909-8872

**Check your credit reports now.** (Unless you have already done so in the past month). You can get one free credit report per year from Equifax, TransUnion, and Experian. To request yours, go to [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com). Scrutinize your credit card and bank account statements for unfamiliar activity, and sign up for



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630 Delp Rd., Suite 100  
Lancaster, PA 17601

p: 717.735.1170 f: 717.735.1181

www.pwallc.net  
info@pwallc.net

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email or text alerts offered by your bank or credit card issuer(s), so that notice of anything suspicious can quickly reach you.

**Consider changing the password for your main email account.** A weak password on that account is a low bar for a cybercrook to hurdle – and once hurdled, that crook could potentially pose as you to change the passwords on your financial accounts.<sup>2</sup>

**File your taxes as early as possible.** Tax fraud often occurs early in the tax season. Hackers can use your social security number to obtain a fraudulent tax refund.

**If someone calls you out of the blue claiming to be from Equifax, do not cooperate with them.** Unless Equifax is returning your call, they will not contact you by phone. The same applies if you get a random, unsolicited email or text from “Equifax” – do not comply, or you may inadvertently hand over personal information to a fraudster.

Stay vigilant, today and in the future and remember not to hesitate to give us a call. We are here to help!

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**Citations.**

1 - [wired.com/story/how-to-protect-yourself-from-that-massive-equifax-breach/](http://wired.com/story/how-to-protect-yourself-from-that-massive-equifax-breach/) [9/7/17]

2 - [cleveland.com/business/index.ssf/2017/09/devastating\\_data\\_breach\\_at\\_equ.html](http://cleveland.com/business/index.ssf/2017/09/devastating_data_breach_at_equ.html) [9/8/17]