

## **How to Protect Yourself: Credit Card Fraud**

*Source: The Florida Attorney General's Office*

Credit card fraud is a serious problem. Credit card fraud causes an estimated \$1 billion each year in losses in the United States. The consumer pays for the fraud by way of higher finance charges, annual fees, and increased costs for law enforcement. To protect against credit card fraud, consider the following:

### **Protect Your Bills and Credit Cards**

Unscrupulous scam artists raid mailboxes to gather renewal credit cards and bills to obtain credit card numbers. Be aware of when your cards and bills are due to arrive. If they are late, contact your credit card company. Endorse all credit cards when they arrive. Keep a record of your credit card numbers in a secure place. Include in that record the expiration date, phone number and address of the card issuer. Check your cards to ensure none are missing. Always get your credit card back promptly from salesclerks.

### **Guard Your Credit Card Number**

Do not give your credit card number over the phone unless you are dealing with a company you have done business with before. Memorize your PIN number and do not keep it with your credit card.

### **Merchants Cannot Require You to Show Your Credit Card for Identification When Paying by Check**

It is a violation of Florida law to require a consumer to produce a credit card number or expiration date before payment by check. However, a consumer can be required to show that they have a valid credit card. The merchant can then note the type of card (Visa, Master Card, etc.) and the name of the issuing bank, but nothing else.

### **Safety Tips When Using Your Credit Card**

Destroy carbons and voided receipts immediately. Check your bill against receipts that have been kept in a secure place. If you are not using a credit card, destroy it immediately. Report stolen and lost cards immediately. When on a trip, carry the name of the issuer, account number and the toll free number of the issuer in a secure place. Note the date, time and person to whom you reported that your card was lost or stolen.

### **Reporting Losses and Fraud**

If you lose your credit or charge cards or if you realize they've been lost or stolen, immediately call the issuer(s). Many companies have toll-free numbers and 24-hour service to deal with such emergencies. By law, once you report the loss or theft, you have no further responsibility for unauthorized charges. In any event, your maximum liability under federal law is \$50 per card.

If you suspect fraud, you may be asked to sign a statement under oath that you did not make the purchase(s) in question.

### **Additional Information**

For a free copy of Best Sellers, a complete list of FTC publications, contact:

Consumer Response Center  
Federal Trade Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20580  
(202) 326-2222; TDD: (202) 326-2502