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100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

CHECK FRAUD

By Les C. Cseh

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YOU COULD BE ON THE HOOK!

Did you know that the UCC (Uniform Commercial Code) regulations place responsibility for forgery losses partially on bank customers, rather than solely on the banks? But in addition to this exposure, there can be significant expenses and lost time investigating the crime, not to mention damage to your credibility and reputation.

Your only defence is to show that you have taken due diligence. One way to demonstrate this is by implementing careful practices regarding your checks. Another is to use checks with well implemented security features.

HOW BAD IS THE PROBLEM?

The problem is so serious that the banks don't like to reveal the extent of the problem. Estimates range from hundreds of millions to 10 billion dollars annually.

In 1991, the FBI tracked over 26,000 cases, but this is just the tip of the iceberg, because the FBI mostly focuses on cases where the amount exceeds \$100,000. Just one example comes from The Green Sheet (a publication to the Financial Services Industry), reporting an incident where a family had allegedly stolen more than \$1 million from area merchants since 1993 by writing checks on closed and non-existent accounts at 11 financial institutions in Indiana and Chicago under 25 different names.

CHECK FRAUD

In just 4 years, Northern Trust Bank has detected more than 3 million dollars worth of counterfeit checks.

WHAT KIND OF THINGS DO CRIMINALS LOOK FOR?

It is an endless list, but here are some of the types of things that someone looking to counterfeit or tamper might look for:

- * High volume bank accounts where a fraudulent check can easily slip through.
 - * Checks that are easy to reproduce using a color copier.
 - * Checks that are easy to tamper with.
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- * Easy access to checkbook or check stock.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MYSELF?

By protection, I mean reducing the chance of someone counterfeiting or altering your checks, as well as reducing your liability when it occurs.

Be aware that it is impossible to prevent fraud. But you can significantly minimize the risk using a two-prong approach. It is critical that good procedures related to your check processing are put in place, and that you use a check that is difficult to counterfeit or alter (see sidebar).

- * Reconcile your bank statement promptly. Now that bank statements are available online, you can do this as frequently as you feel is necessary for your situation.
- * Restrict access to your checkbook/check stock. Ensure that only trusted staff that need access have it.
- * Audit your checks. However, this can be difficult because often checks are removed from the bottom or middle of the book or stack.
- * Use a custom design. While this isn't an affordable option for many businesses, look into it. The next best thing is to ensure that your check supplier uses comprehensive security features. Remember though that a custom design is not a substitute for security features.
- * Advise your bank branches' officials of the security features in your checks .. in person or in writing (and keep a copy of the letter on file!).
- * If you issue a large number of checks, particularly with a low amount (eg. rebate checks), open a separate account and alert the

CHECK FRAUD

bank staff of an upper limit for that account.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Don't take unnecessary chances. The more security you have through procedures and choice of check form, the less likely that someone will tamper with your checks.

Avoiding Credit Card Fraud

By Peter Kenny

Credit card fraud is becoming more and more of a problem, and if you are not careful then you could lose money to fraudsters. If you are worried about fraud but are unsure how you can protect yourself and your credit cards, then this article could help you. Here are some useful tips and advice about how to protect yourself from credit card fraud:

Methods of fraud

The methods and types of fraud are increasing as criminals learn new techniques and get improved technology. The most common methods of fraud today include:

- Copying and cloning of cards
- ATM fraud
- Internet card fraud
- PIN number stealing

All of these methods are used more commonly than ever before to effectively steal your money. Obviously, it is impossible to totally eliminate the problem of credit card fraud, but there are things you can do to greatly reduce the risks.

Keep cards close

Make sure that you never let your cards out of your sight. Never leave cards unattended, and certainly don't lend your card to anyone. If you are paying in a restaurant or shop, make sure you pay attention as to where your card is. A common method used to copy your card is to get the details whilst you pay, so keep an eye on your card at all times.

Check receipts

Whenever you get a receipt or a credit card bill, check that all the items and amounts are correct. If there are any amounts that you are unsure about, contact your card issuer immediately. Any paperwork that you throw away should be disposed of properly. Shred documents so that people cannot go through your rubbish and discover your card details.

CHECK FRAUD

Look behind you

When withdrawing money from a cash machine, make sure no one is looking over your shoulder to read your PIN. The easiest way for someone to use your card illegally is to see your PIN and then steal the card. Also, make sure you never keep a written record of your PIN, especially near your cards.

Use reputable firms

When buying on the Internet, make sure that you only purchase items from large and well-established providers. Small or unknown providers should be avoided as even if they are genuine, their security and encryption may be poor and allow fraudsters to access your details.

Keep contact numbers

If you have your card stolen or you think you have been the victim of credit card fraud, then you need to sort the problem out as quickly as possible. Keep all the contact numbers for your card issuer in a safe place so that you can call them up and sort out problems immediately. If you are careful and act quickly, you can limit the damage of fraud or prevent it occurring at all.

Peter Kenny is a writer for creditcards-gb For additional articles and an extensive resource for everything about credit cards, please visit us at

and

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