

Identity Fraud eNewsletter

Fall Edition 2012



The Rise of Credit Card Fraud

Before the rise of the internet, credit card fraud amounted to a thief stealing your credit card and immediately using it to make purchases by presenting themselves as you. Compared to today's [fraudulent activity](#), that almost seems quaint. And unfortunately, Colorado is the number two state with the highest rate of credit card fraud, right behind Nevada.

Nowadays, thieves aren't looking to steal your credit cards as much as they want your credit card number. Whether they steal information from your trash, recycling bin, or mailbox, that number allows them to purchase merchandise online, ship it to a vacant address, receive the fraudulent goods, and get away scot-free. In fact, selling credit card numbers over the internet has become so rampant, crooks can buy a bulk of stolen numbers for as low as one dollar, and then use them at "[cardable sites](#)", which are websites with weak fraud prevention that allow stolen cards to be used on them.



But before you swear off the internet forever, the FBI has compiled some [helpful tips](#) to protect yourself from various forms of Internet fraud, which include:

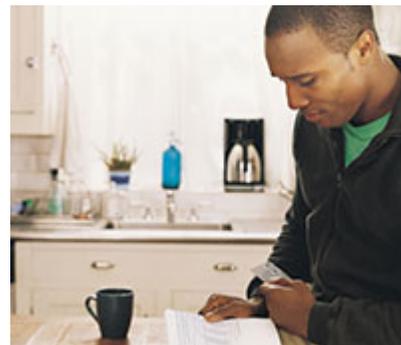
- Ensure a site is secure and reputable before providing your credit card number online.
- Don't trust a site just because it claims to be secure.
- Promptly reconcile credit card statements to avoid unauthorized charges.
- Beware of providing credit card information when requested through unsolicited emails.

If you have questions about a company, check it out with your local consumer protection office or [Better Business Bureau](#). Taking precautionary steps can not only offer some assurance, but will make life more difficult for these emboldened criminals.

eStatements to the Rescue

Mail fraud is considered low hanging fruit to thieves – for them, your mailbox is one of the simplest ways to steal monthly account statements. That's why it is recommended to go paperless and switch to eStatements. You'll have the peace of mind knowing that your monthly statement is protected in an online secure web environment where only you can access it safely and securely. In addition to security, eStatements are:

- Free to Bellco Checking and Savings Account holders.
- Available sooner than statements that are mailed through



the postal service.

- Much better for the environment because of reduced paper waste.
- Simpler for recordkeeping as there's no need for filing cabinets or paper shredders.

Signing up for eStatements is easy too. Just [sign in to Bellco's Online Banking](#) and click on **Accounts**, then **Statements/Tax Forms/Notices**. It's that simple.

How strong are your passwords?

Thanks to smart phones and social media sites like [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#), nearly 12 million Americans became victims of Identity Fraud in 2011. LinkedIn had the highest rate of fraudulent activity due in large part to members providing personal information as they seek to network with connections they know and quite often don't know. When it comes to smart phones, nearly two-thirds of users still don't have a password on their home screen. This means scammers have unlimited access to all their personal information if the phone is ever lost or stolen.



While it's important to keep watch on what you share with others online or on your mobile device, one of the best first steps to prevent thieves from accessing your information is by creating a unique strong password for each of your important websites. So, what makes a strong password? According to experts, at the minimum, a password should have the following:

- It should be long with at least 8 characters.
- It should **not** have any commonalities such as 123, your birth date, your login name, or even words that can be found in the dictionary.
- It should contain special characters such as @#%\$.
- It should use a variation of capitalization and small letters.
- It should not be easily guessed based on information you provide on social media pages.

Still not sure if your password is strong enough? Get some [expert advice](#) on managing all of your unique passwords, and if you think you're ready, test them out at the [Microsoft Safety and Security Center](#) to see if your idea of password strength measures up.

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