



IDENTITY THEFT ASSISTANCE CENTER

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## For Immediate Release

### **FINANCIAL STRESS COULD LEAD TO MORE FRAUD THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, SAYS IDENTITY THEFT ASSISTANCE CENTER**

*ITAC urges consumers to use extra caution to prevent ID theft*

**WASHINGTON, DC, November 6, 2008**— ITAC, the Identity Theft Assistance Center, says financial stress could lead to an increase in fraud this holiday season and urges consumers to take extra measures to protect their personal data.

“Times are tough right now and the last thing consumers need is to deal with identity theft, especially during the holidays,” said ITAC President Anne Wallace. “Listen to your inner Scrooge and be stingy with your personal information.”

ITAC reminds consumers that identity theft can come from many sources, and they can reduce the odds of being victims by monitoring their accounts online, obtaining a free copy of their credit bureau report each year, and taking the following precautions:

- **Protect your purse or wallet.** One of the leading causes of identity theft is lost or stolen belongings containing personal information. Minimize the number of credit cards and other items with personal information printed on them that you carry.
- **Guard your PIN when using your debit card.** Look for suspicious activity, like someone standing behind you. Always guard your PIN and transaction amount, and immediately cancel your transaction and leave if you see something suspicious.
- **Protect your PIN and account numbers.** Treat online unsolicited offers over the Internet with suspicion. Never disclose your PIN or account password to any online merchant for any reason.
- **Don't volunteer personal information when you use your credit card.** It's standard practice to be asked to display a personal ID as requested by a merchant, but not your mother's maiden name or date of birth.
- **Shop smart online.** Keep your anti-virus software updated. Shop only at sites that are safe and secure and look for websites that display a closed padlock at the bottom of your browser window.

For those who want a service that alerts them to suspicious activity, ITAC offers ITAC Sentinel® ([www.itacsentinel.com](http://www.itacsentinel.com)), a comprehensive set of tools that offers superior fraud prevention—including ITAC victim assistance—and supports ITAC’s mission of working with law enforcement to fight identity theft.

“If you’ve been a victim of identity theft, or know someone who’s gone through the ordeal of identity theft and know the consequences of the crime, you may want to consider giving yourself the peace of mind that comes from subscribing to a service,” said Wallace.

### **About ITAC**

ITAC, the Identity Theft Assistance Center ([www.identitytheftassistance.org](http://www.identitytheftassistance.org)), is a nonprofit coalition of financial services companies united in our commitment to protect our customers from identity theft. As the leading provider of identity assistance services, ITAC protects all consumers through partnerships with law enforcement, education and identity management services. ITAC has helped more than 45,000 consumers recover from identity theft.

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