

The Equifax Data Breach

By Bob Deitrick and Steven Morgan

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On September 7th, 2017 credit reporting agency Equifax announced that cybercriminals had gained access to the personal information of as many as 143 million Americans between May and July of this year.

To find out if you were affected or not, please visit: www.equifaxsecurity2017.com. Users will be asked to enter their last name and the last six digits of their Social Security number. If you were affected, Equifax will ask you to enroll in an identity theft protection product called: **TrustedID Premier**. This program that will provide free credit monitoring for a year. In addition, Steven and I recommend taking the following measures to be considered as well:

- **Closely monitor your credit reports**, which are available for free once per year from Equifax, TransUnion, and Experian. Stagger them to see a different one every 4 months.
- **Stay vigilant**. Cyber criminals who get ahold of the data could use it at any time. With 143 million to choose from, they may be patient.
- **Consider changing the password** on your e-mail accounts. A weak password could allow a criminal to pose as you and to change the passwords on your financial accounts.
- Be creative with your bank, investment, and credit card passwords. **Avoid simple passwords** based on a pet's name, your last name, or a year of birth. Consider using a password that is long and random which makes it more difficult for someone to guess.
- If you receive a phone call "out of the blue" claiming to be from Equifax, do not cooperate. Unless they're returning your call, they will not contact you by telephone. The same applies if you get a random, unsolicited e-mail or text message from "Equifax." You may inadvertently provide personal information to a fraudster.
- **This did not impact our firm, Cadaret Grant or Polaris Financial at all**; nonetheless, we want to make sure that you know what to watch for moving forward, just in case you have a bank account or a credit or debit card that may have been compromised in some way. Here is an additional article you can read up on that reviews this issue in detail:
- <http://www.realclearlife.com/finance/need-know-equifax-hack/>
- Also, in the meantime, we recommend that you **be very diligent and check your savings and checking accounts online** to ensure that you do not see any unfamiliar or dubious activity. If you do, contact your banking institution immediately.

If you have any questions regarding our recommendations, or need to know more about these measures to safeguard your personal information, do not hesitate to call us at: 614.901.3400.

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