

**** Consumer Advisory ****

Terry Goddard Offers Tips to Protect Veterans Against Identity Theft

(Phoenix, Ariz. - May 23, 2006) Attorney **General** Terry Goddard today advised military veterans to be especially vigilant about attempts to steal their identity. The risk of identity theft was heightened for veterans when a burglar stole an electronic data file from the home of a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employee earlier this month.

Goddard emphasized that there is no evidence the stolen data has been used for ID theft purposes to date. The stolen data includes names, birth dates and Social Security numbers of all veterans discharged after 1975, those discharged before 1975 who have filed claims since then with the VA, and some spouses.

"With the stolen information, the thief could open a new line of credit in a veteran's name," Goddard said. "There is also an increased risk of tampering with existing credit accounts. Veterans should take extra care to check bank and credit card statements for unauthorized usage."

Goddard offered the following steps veterans could take to further protect themselves:

Free Credit Reports

Arizonans are entitled to one free credit report each year via the Internet at www.annualcreditreport.com or by telephone at 1.877.322.8228.

This Web site allows consumers to request their free annual credit report from each of the three credit reporting companies - Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. You can check your report more often if you pay the fee set by each company. Or, you can sign up for one of the several credit monitoring services which are available for a fee.

Viewing their credit report gives consumers a summary of their credit use and an opportunity to determine if any unauthorized credit lines have been opened in their name.

Place an Initial Security Alert

Anyone can place an Initial Security Alert on their credit report for 90 days at no charge. These alerts notify credit institutions to verify your identification before extending credit in your name. You can contact any of the three credit reporting companies to place this alert. The company that takes your request will share it with the other two credit reporting companies.

To place a fraud alert, contact one of the three credit reporting companies:

Equifax 1.800.525.6285 www.equifax.com	Experian 1.800.397.3742 www.experian.com	TransUnion 1.800.680.7289 www.transunion.com
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Please note:

If you decide to place a fraud alert on your credit file, it will become more difficult for you to obtain new credit quickly, but you should be alerted if someone is trying to open a credit line in your name.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Information

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has set up a Web site (www.firstgov.gov) with more information on this security breach. The VA has also opened a call center to answer questions. Veterans can call 1-800-333-4636 (1800-FED-INFO) Monday through Saturday between 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. (EST). The VA said it will keep the call center open as long as needed.

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