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'Identity Thief' Hits Theaters and Increases Awareness of Crime

In real life, identity theft is no laughing matter; Equifax offers tips to protect yourself

ATLANTA, Feb. 8, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- It may be the thing of Hollywood movies, but identity theft is a very real problem in the United States. With this week's opening of the movie, "Identity Thief," the story focuses on a man (Jason Bateman) hit hard by identity theft when a woman (Melissa McCarthy) racks up credit card charges in his name. The Personal Solutions division of Equifax Inc. (NYSE: EFX) is providing tips to avoid becoming a real-life victim.

(Logo: <https://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20060224/CLF037LOGO>)

More than 11.6 million adults were victims of identity theft in 2011, according to Javelin Strategy & Research. Child identity theft is also a significant problem, which many people don't realize. 2.5 percent of U.S. households with children under age 18 have at least one child whose personal information has been compromised by identity criminals.

At this time of year, Equifax is particularly focused on educating consumers about tax identity theft, a growing problem. In the federal fiscal year 2012, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Identity Protection Specialized Unit received 448,809 cases, up nearly 80 percent over the previous year.

Ten tips for preventing identity theft include:

- Keep birth certificates, Social Security cards and other personal documents in a lockbox in your home. Make sure they are put away when someone is working in your home or even if you have a roommate.
- When disposing of documents, use a diagonal shredder, which makes documents harder to piece together than a traditional shredder does.
- Don't leave outgoing bills, government forms or tax forms in a mailbox. Take them directly to the post office. Have your mail held by the post office while on vacation.
- Don't put your driver's license number on your personal checks. Consider writing just your first initial and last name instead of your full name.
- Don't toss credit card receipts in public places.
- Install anti-virus software, anti-malware software and a firewall on your computer and keep them up to date. A tech-savvy identity thief can use a virus to get personal information from your computer without you even knowing.
- Use unique passwords that are different for each website.
- Don't put your birthdate or other sensitive information on your social media accounts, even just the month and day. A thief can figure out the year you were born by looking at your posts.

- You're entitled to one free credit report each year, which you can obtain at www.annualcreditreport.com. Review your report for unfamiliar lines of credit, an account you didn't open, errors in your personal information or Social Security number.
- For added security, consider a credit monitoring and identity theft protection product for yourself such as *Equifax Complete™ Premier Plan*, or for your family, such as *Equifax Complete™ Family Plan*, which can help protect the identities of two adults and up to four minor children in one comprehensive plan.

About Equifax

Equifax Personal Solutions empowers consumers with the confidence and control to be their financial best. Find out more about Equifax's innovative suite of credit monitoring and identity protection products at www.equifax.com. Get smart information on everything from credit to retirement, all in one place at the Equifax Finance Blog, blog.equifax.com.

Equifax is a global leader in consumer, commercial and workforce information solutions, providing businesses of all sizes and consumers with information they can trust. We organize and assimilate data on more than 500 million consumers and 81 million businesses worldwide, and use advanced analytics and proprietary technology to create and deliver customized insights that enrich both the performance of businesses and the lives of consumers.

Headquartered in Atlanta, Equifax operates or has investments in 18 countries and is a member of Standard & Poor's (S&P) 500® Index. Its common stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) under the symbol EFX. For more information, please visit www.equifax.com.

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