



NEW ENGLAND CAPITAL FINANCIAL ADVISORS, LLC

Registered Investment Adviser

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Financial Advisors
Independent Objective Advice

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Dear New England Capital Clients:

Did your mother ever tell you fondly that you were one in a million? The better question now is: are you one of 143 million? If you are, you're one of **44%** of Americans that had their security breached at Equifax credit bureau.

According to the company website: "On July 29, 2017 Equifax discovered that criminals exploited a US website application's vulnerability to gain access to certain files." The information that the hackers gained access to include names, Social Security numbers, dates of birth, addresses, and in some instances driver's license numbers. They also stole credit card numbers for about 209,000 people. The company then compounded its public relations nightmare by sending people to a website to find out if they were affected. The site included language so that anyone signing in to get this information had to waive any right to join a class action lawsuit against the company should their identities be stolen and financial harm come to them. Under pressure they no longer include this language and in most states, have waived the \$10 fee for this service. **If you are one of the consumers that rushed to lock their credit files with a pin at the three credit information bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and Trans Union), please change your pin once you receive it.** Instead of being assigned randomly generated pin numbers, the pin numbers reflected the date and time you had signed up for the freeze. This template used to create sequential pin numbers puts consumers at additional risk since hackers know the pin set up they can potentially unlock credit files by guessing a series of possible pins. Equifax has since changed how they assigned pin numbers so that they are randomly generated.

If you've never used credit, (never had a mortgage, car loan, credit cards or other personal loans) you may not be affected. If you have credit, there's a high probability and that the identity thieves now have your Social Security number and address. Besides fraudulently obtaining credit in your name, experts are worried that the hackers could fraudulently file tax returns in your name to obtain a tax refund.

The US Federal Trade Commission recommends you take several steps *immediately*. Request a free copy of your credit report once a year from the three credit reporting agencies: Equifax, Experian and Trans Union. You can do this at <https://www.annualcreditreport.com>. When you receive the report, look for suspicious accounts or activities that you don't recognize. Monitor your online statements. The credit report won't tell you if there's been money stolen from a bank account or investment account. At New England Capital we recommend you place a credit freeze with all major credit bureaus. The freeze blocks anyone from accessing your credit report without your permission-- including you. This is the website page Equifax directs you to

see if you were affected and to take appropriate actions if you were
<https://www.equifaxsecurity2017.com/potential-impact/>.

Each credit reporting bureaus will provide a unique personal identification number that you can use to "thaw" your credit file in the event that you need to apply for new lines of credit in the future. Another advantage is that each credit inquiry from a creditor has the potential to lower your credit score so the freeze helps protect your score from scammers filing unnecessary inquiries.

As part of regular protective measures, the custodians we work with monitor accounts to protect against fraudulent activities. Additionally, these are other steps you may want to consider if your information has been breached:

1. If you use your SSN as your User ID for your account you should establish an alternate customer identifier instead.
2. Update security questions and answers.
3. Regularly monitor account and promptly report any concern.
4. Check with your wireless service provider for steps they may recommend for protecting your mobile phone account.

Additionally you can protect yourself if you think identity thieves could intercept offers of new credit sent via postal mail. If you don't want to receive prescreened offers of credit and insurance you can opt out of receiving them for five years by calling toll-free 1-888-5 OPT OUT, (1-888-567-8688).

One final way to protect yourself is to shred old documents with private nonpublic information you have stored in your home. As a service to our clients New England Capital will be hosting a shredding event here at our office please see the details below:

- **Date: Saturday October 7th 2017**
- **Time: 11am-2pm**
- **Location: New England Capital-79 Main Street Meriden, CT 06451**

Bring the documents you'd like to have shredded. Enjoy a bite to eat and some refreshments and the peace of mind knowing that your private information will be destroyed in a secure manner.

Finally our thoughts and prayers go out to our friends and clients in the Texas and Florida areas that have been affected by the devastation of hurricanes Harvey and Irma. While the personal property destruction we've seen on news reports have been awful none of our clients received injuries or loss of life. For that we could be truly grateful.

