

District of Columbia Consumers Have the Right to Obtain a Security Freeze

District of Columbia law gives you the right to place a "security freeze" on your credit report. A security freeze restricts when a credit reporting agency may release information in your credit report without your express authorization or approval.

A security freeze is designed to help prevent credit, loans, and services from being approved in your name without your consent.

To obtain a security freeze, you should contact each credit reporting agency. When you place a security freeze on your credit report, the credit reporting agency will send you a personal identification number or password to use if you later choose to lift the freeze from your credit report, or to authorize the release of your credit report to a specific party or parties, or for a specific period of time after the freeze is in place. To provide that authorization, you must contact the credit reporting agency and provide all of the following:

1. The unique personal identification number or password provided by the credit reporting agency.
2. Verification of your identity.
3. Information regarding who may receive the credit report or the period of time for which the report shall be made available.

Upon receiving your proper request to lift temporarily a freeze from your credit report, the credit reporting agency shall comply within 3 business days. Beginning September 1, 2008, the credit reporting agency is required to provide methods, including web-based and telephonic methods, for you to request that the freeze be temporarily lifted within 15 minutes.

A security freeze does not apply when you have an existing account relationship and a copy of your report is requested by your existing creditor or its agents or affiliates for certain types of account review, collection, fraud control or similar activities.

If you are actively seeking credit, the procedures involved in lifting a security freeze may slow your own applications for credit. You should plan ahead and consider lifting a freeze - either completely if you are shopping around, or for a specific creditor before actually applying for new credit. Beginning September 1, 2008, you will be able to have a credit reporting agency temporarily lift a freeze on your credit report within 15 minutes of your request.

You have a right to take legal action against someone who violates your rights under the credit reporting laws. The action can be brought against a credit reporting agency or anyone who fraudulently caused the release of your credit information.