

**FROM THE OFFICE OF WELD COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
KENNETH R. BUCK**



Fraud Alert!

CREDIT REPORTS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Remember in school when a teacher would threaten to document a student's bad behavior on their permanent record? It sounds funny now, but such a record does exist and can have dramatic impact on your life — it is not a record of your personal behavior per se but of your credit history.

You are entitled to a free credit report each year. This report will outline all of the accounts opened under your name and/or social security number including the available balance, credit limit and payment history of that account. When you receive your credit report, you need to make sure that all of the information included in the report is accurate. If you find inaccurate information, immediately contact (over the phone and then in writing) the business who reported the inaccurate account information to the credit reporting agency and begin the process to have that information removed. Remember, accurate negative information is allowed on your credit report, inaccurate information is not.

If you haven't seen a copy of your credit report before, you will probably be surprised by the amount of information contained in it. You may see accounts that you haven't used in years or maybe don't even remember having. If the balance on these accounts is zero, you are probably in the clear. If you see accounts, however, that you don't remember opening and there are balances due or negative payment history indicated, it may be a red flag that someone has stolen your identity. Contact the reporting agencies immediately and place a fraud alert on your credit. A fraud alert is an indicator to the credit reporting agencies to contact you directly when an account is being opened or a loan is being requested in your name or social security number. This is not a sure-fire measure to preventing identity theft, but it is a good start.

Colorado is one of 23 states that allows consumers to place a credit freeze on your credit report. A freeze prevents any new line of credit from being opened up in your name until the report is "unfrozen". If you do not anticipate making a large purchase or needing a loan, a freeze may be a good option for you to learn more about.

To obtain a copy of your credit report, go to www.annualcreditreport.com or call 1-877-322-8228. Both the web site and the phone number are secure lines and are sponsored by the three primary credit reporting agencies: Experian, Equifax, TransUnion.

Contact your local police agency if you think you are a victim of a crime. To contact the Weld County District Attorney's Office, call (970) 356-4010 ext. 4702.