



State of Vermont
Department of Taxes
133 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-1401

Agency of Administration

07/29/2020

Notice to Taxpayers Who Filed Property Transfer Tax Returns between February 2017 and July 2020

This notice is posted because the Department of Taxes recently learned of a security issue that could have impacted Vermonters' personal information if their information appeared on a Property Transfer Tax return filed through the Department's online filing site between February 1, 2017 and July 2, 2020.

What happened?

On July 2, 2020, the Department was alerted to a security vulnerability for taxpayers who had filed Property Transfer Tax returns through the Department's online filing site between February 2017 and July 2020. Verification credentials for electronically filed property transfer tax returns available in public municipal records could be used to access previously submitted tax return information. The credentials could have been used to access private information including the social security number of the buyer of the property, and last four digits of the social security number of the seller of the property.

What has the Department done?

Immediately after learning of the vulnerability, the Department disabled the functionality that would allow a person to use the credentials to obtain unauthorized access to tax data. It has since patched the vulnerability so that information in the municipal records cannot be used to search for previously submitted property transfer tax returns.

What should a taxpayer do next?

The Department is not able to determine whether any individual's data was accessed and has had no reports of unauthorized access of property transfer tax returns. While the Department believes the risk of unauthorized access of any individual's data is low, taxpayers who filed property tax returns during the time frame above are encouraged to take the steps outlined in the attached "Tips for Guarding Against Identity Theft."

The Tax Department recognizes that knowing your information is secure is an important part of filing taxes and understands there will be concern and frustration. The security of personal data is the highest priority of the Department and notifying taxpayers of the steps they can take to help protect themselves is critical.

To talk to a Tax Department representative, please call the Vermont Taxpayer Advocate at 802-828-6848 or email us at tax.taxpayeradvocate@vermont.gov. Attached are recommendations to help protect individuals against identity theft.



TIPS FOR GUARDING AGAINST IDENTITY THEFT

- (1) Review your bank, credit card and debit card account statements over the next twelve to twenty-four months and immediately report any suspicious activity to your bank or credit union.
- (2) Monitor your credit reports with the major credit reporting agencies.

Equifax 1-800-685-1111 P.O. Box 740241 Atlanta, GA 30374-0241 www.equifax.com	Experian 1-888-397-3742 P.O. Box 2104 Allen, TX 75013 www.experian.com	TransUnion 1-800-916-8800 P.O. Box 2000 Chester, PA 19022 www.transunion.com
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Under Vermont law, you are entitled to a free copy of your credit report from those agencies every twelve months. Call the credit reporting agency at the telephone number on the report if you find: (A) Accounts you did not open; (B) Inquiries from creditors that you did not initiate; or (C) Inaccurate personal information, such as home address and Social Security number.

- (3) If you find suspicious activity on your credit reports or other account statements, call your local police or sheriff's office and file a report of identity theft. Get a copy of the police report. You may need to give copies of the police report to creditors to clear up your records, and also to access some services that are free to identity theft victims.
- (4) If you find suspicious activity on your credit reports or on your other account statements, consider placing a fraud alert on your credit files so creditors will contact you before opening new accounts. Call any one of the three credit reporting agencies at the number below to place fraud alerts with all of the agencies.

Equifax 800-525-6285	Experian 888-397-3742	TransUnion 800-680-7289
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- (5) You may also get information about security freezes using the below addresses:

Equifax: https://www.freeze.equifax.com/Freeze/jsp/SFF_PersonalIDInfo.jsp	Experian: http://www.experian.com/consumer/security_freeze.html	TransUnion: https://www.transunion.com/credit-freeze
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If you do not have Internet access but would like to learn more about how to place a security freeze, contact the VT Attorney General's Office at 802-656-3183 (800-649-2424 toll free in Vermont only).

- (6) Even if you do not find suspicious activity on your credit report or your other account statements, it is important that you check your credit report for the next two years. Just call one of the numbers in paragraph 2 above to order your reports or to keep a fraud alert in place.

Helpful information about identity theft, security freezes, and obtaining a free copy of your credit report is available on the VT Attorney General's website: <http://ago.vermont.gov/>. Another helpful source is the Federal Trade Commission website: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0014-identity-theft>.

