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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

CA: Nat'l ID Theft Prevention and Awareness Month



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody is issuing a Consumer Alert with tips to help protect Floridians in recognition of National Identity Theft Prevention and Awareness Month. More than 440,000 consumers nationwide fell victim to identity theft last year, including almost 38,000 Floridians. Safeguarding consumers' identity is especially important amidst the waning hours of last-minute holiday shopping.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Identity theft is not simply damaging to victims' credit card or bank accounts, it can wreck lives. Victims may find out that their Social Security Number was stolen years after the crime when they try to buy their dream home and are denied because their credit was destroyed, or they may be questioned by the police because the criminal who stole their identity committed other crimes using their information. I am issuing these tips because I don't want any Floridian to live out these nightmare situations."

Floridians can reduce the chance of becoming an identity theft victim by remaining vigilant in all financial matters. Steps consumers can take to avoid identity theft include:

- Ordering and closely reviewing a free credit report from each national credit reporting agency once a year;
- Abstaining from emailing personal data unless using encryption technology;
- Browsing and purchasing online using only a secure connection. Never use autofill feature when filling out online forms, unless it is on a trusted site;
- Using anti-virus software, anti-spyware and a firewall;
- Avoiding oversharing on social networking sites;

- Refraining from giving solicitors personal or financial information over the phone, by email or pop-up message; and
- Opting out of pre-screened offers of credit and insurance by mail. To opt out, call 1(888) 567-8688 or visit OptOutPreScreen.com.

For more tips on avoiding identity theft, click here.

If someone is a victim of identity theft, the following steps should be taken immediately:

- Call the fraud departments of all three major credit bureaus and place a credit freeze;
- Contact the creditors for any accounts that have been tampered with or opened fraudulently; and
- File a report with law enforcement.

For more steps, click here.

The Attorney General recognizes that the holiday season is a busy time for all, but it is especially busy for criminals online who aim to steal consumers' identities and credit card numbers. Attorney General Moody released the 2019 Holiday Consumer Protection Guide with tips for consumers on safer online shopping, avoiding charity fraud and item recalls. To download a copy of the guide, click here.

Earlier this month, the Attorney General highlighted tips on safer online shopping during the busy holiday season. To learn more, click here.