
Citibank Prints 600,000 Social Security Numbers on Exterior of Envelopes

March 10, 2010 - Citibank sent out 600,000 notifications to its customers last month to warn them about a large data breach. The bank inadvertently published customer Social Security Numbers on the exterior of envelopes containing year-end tax data.

The error occurred in a mailing to customers that were being sent tax statements by the bank. Affected customers had their Social Security Numbers printed along with a string of other letters and numbers on the bottom of the envelope. Because of this, the numbers were probably not recognizable for what they were however there is still some risk of identity theft for all of the victims of the error.

The bank is offering 180 days of credit monitoring services to its customers; a service which will not prevent any future identity theft. The bank has also established a phone number for customers to call if they have any questions about the breach. That number is 877-478-6597.

Any Citibank customer who believes they have been impacted by this breach may want to consider the following steps. First, you may want to consider notifying the CRAs (Experian, Equifax and Trans Union) that your information was exposed in a data breach and ask them to place an alert on your account. This will not stop identity theft but it will provide a warning to merchants if new credit is being setup in your name. It is up to the merchant to decide if they will establish credit anyway.

Second, if you have no need for access to instant credit you may want to consider placing a freeze on your credit file. This will make it nearly impossible for anyone to establish new credit in your name without your knowledge.

Citibank sent out warning letters to affected customers during the week of February 15th.

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