

Equifax Hack Could Affect Charlottesville Mortgage Applicants. What are you doing to stay safe??

When news of the Equifax hack first broke, the credit ratings giant scrambled to minimize fallout from this massive personal information breach. After an initial embarrassing misstep (they tried to have affected consumers sign off on Equifax's liability), the company moved to ameliorate the hack by offering free ID protection to consumers.

Charlottesville homeowners and potential home buyers had reason to do more than shake their heads at yet another electronic pratfall. In one way or another, most Charlottesville real estate transactions involve creditworthiness appraisals that are managed by the three credit reporting agencies (Equifax is one). That means that among the 143 million consumers it admits could be "potentially impacted" are certainly a lot of current and future Charlottesville home buyers. The stolen information includes names, Social Security numbers, birth dates, addresses—and for hundreds of thousands, credit card numbers. Even some Virginia driver license data figured in the Equifax hack.

Given the obvious potential for identity theft, the company's Chairman went online to make an unprecedented offer: his firm will furnish a comprehensive package of credit file monitoring and identity theft protection to *everyone*. Literally.

To every consumer in the United States. For a year! For free!!

With few exceptions, it was left to us to take the initiative to take them up on the offer. That factor might shrink the size of the undertaking, but even so, delivering on this scale was unlikely to be accomplished without a few hitches.

Hitch #1: when this many millions of people try to check in on any site, no system can handle it all at once. So contacting this [Equifax Trusted ID Premier](#) link results in varying lengths of delay before enrollment can be confirmed.

Hitch #2: because it is now obvious that sophisticated thieves are active in the credit reporting industry, it will be doubly necessary for Equifax to make certain that you are who you say you are. That makes multiple email confirmations back-and-forth unavoidable.

It's a cinch that Charlottesville residents who decide to sign up for the free protection should also be extra vigilant in monitoring their financial transactions. An additional step is also possible: you can contact any one of the three credit agencies (Equifax, TransUnion, or Experian) to request that they place a 90-day "**fraud alert**" on your file. It's free, and whichever agency you contact is required to notify the other two. Fraud alerts obligate any lender to contact you before they issue credit in your name. You can renew the alert as many times as you wish—and cancel at any point.

Your credit score is a vital ingredient when it's time to look for favorable home loan offers, so even before the Equifax hack, it's always been well worth protecting. Give me a call when questions about this or other Charlottesville real estate matters come up: I'll be minding the phone!



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Born and raised in the Shenandoah Valley of Central Virginia, I love everything outdoors. Most of my free time is spent hiking, rock climbing, playing water sports, or cooking out on the back deck with friends. As a child, my parents built me with the core values of a southern gentleman. Trust starts with honesty and honesty builds integrity. I'm a technology guru! One of my favorite hobbies is restoring old homes in depressed neighborhoods to meet the needs of our generation today. My mission is to build a career worth having, a business worth owning, and a life worth living.

I'm an Accredited Buyer's Representative (ABR) with the National Association of Realtors. Which means I have extensive training to help walk you through the home buying process from start to finish. From lenders and home inspectors to mortgage agents and closing companies, together we will find the best home for your family's needs!

As an e-PRO®, I can show your home to over 500 million visitors today. And you don't even need to vacuum! Curb appeal isn't just about looking good from the street. It's about looking good from the digital highway!

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