Frauds, Scams and Covid-19

Internal Audit Services (IAS) continues to keep you informed on the latest frauds and scams.

January 1, 2020 to July 31, 2020

Canadian reports of *all* frauds:

32,076

(47,386 in 2019)

Canadian victims of fraud:
14,811

(19,926 in 2019)

Lost to fraud:
$54M

($102.5M in 2019)

Between March 6, 2020 and August 31, 2020

Canadian reports of *Covid-19* fraud:

4,141

Canadian victims of Covid-19 frauds:
2,963

Lost to Covid-19 frauds:
$5.6M

In our last bulletin April 2020, IAS provided a snapshot of some of the current scams reported to the Canadian Anti- Fraud Centre (CAFC) related to Covid-19. Unfortunately, fraudsters will take any and every possible opportunity to take advantage of you, even during a pandemic.

The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (CAFC) issued a warning to Canadians on June 30, 2020 that there has been an **increase in identity fraud** reporting since Covid-19 started.

By August 17, 2020 there were over 700 frauds reported specifically related to the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB).

Fraudsters are getting their hands on personal and sensitive information that can help them steal your identity. They are applying for credit cards, bank accounts, government benefits or try to take over your email and social media accounts. They will stop at nothing to get the information they need to become the criminal version of you.

What is identity theft?

Identity theft refers to criminals stealing someone else's personal information for criminal purposes. Identity theft can be:

- unsophisticated, such as dumpster diving and mail theft
- more elaborate, such as phishing or database breaches

What is identity fraud?

Identity fraud happens when criminals use stolen personal information. It is often used to commit another crime. Criminals can use your stolen or reproduced information to:

- access your computer/email
- access your bank accounts or open new bank accounts

- transfer bank balances to anyone, anywhere
- apply for loans and credit cards
- buy goods and services with your credit
- hide their criminal activities
- receive government benefits like the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) or the Canadian Student Response Benefit (CSRB)

What can you do to protect yourself?

- If you receive unsolicited emails, phone calls and text messages asking for personal or work information DO NOT give it up. You do not know who you are communicating with.
- Check your credit reports (e.g. Equifax, Transunion etc.), bank and credit card statements and report any irregularities or concerns immediately to the credit reporting agency or your financial institute.
- Be cautious about any communications *that invoke a sense of urgency* while asking you to change data or supply sensitive information.
- Shred personal (including health related) and financial documents before putting them in the garbage.
- And although most people don't really get much in the mail anymore, make sure you that you check your mailbox on a regular basis to limit possible mail theft. If you move, notify the post office, your financial institutions and service providers.

Online Safety Tips

- Be aware of your online presence. Do you post too much personal information on social media?
- Inspect links to websites to ensure that connections are secure. Look for the padlock symbol on the top left-hand corner of the URL.
- Better yet, don't click on any links. Try to find the website yourself and make sure the padlock symbol is there.
- Be smart with your passwords. Try not to use words, names, dates of birth, etc. that you post on social media. Ensure you change your passwords regularly and try not to use the same password for more than one site. Better yet, get a password management app so that you never need to think about passwords again.
- Keep your software updated. Often updates contain critical patches to ensure the ongoing security of your software. Always keep your antivirus software up to date.

For more cybersecurity information log into the MacEwan Portal:
https://myportal.macewan.ca/staff/tech-support/cyber-security-checklist.html