



## NEWS YOU CAN USE

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### THE LATEST SCAM . . . . .

#### **Children's Social Security Numbers Targeted for Identity Theft**

The latest form of identity theft doesn't depend on stealing your Social Security number. Now thieves are targeting your child's number long before the little one even has a bank account.

Online businesses are using computers to find dormant Social Security numbers – usually those assigned to children who don't use them – then selling those numbers under another name to help people establish phony credit and run up huge debts they will never pay off.

It's easy to create a false credit score using these numbers. Lenders need to understand the risks.

Because the numbers often come from young children who have no money of their own, they carry no spending history and offer a chance to open a new, unblemished line of credit. People who buy the numbers can then quickly build their credit rating in a process called "piggybacking," which involves linking to someone else's credit file.

The crime can come back to hurt children when they get older and seek credit for the first time, only to discover their Social Security number has been used by someone else.

Federal investigators say many businesses do not realize that a growing number of those credit scores are based on fraudulent information.

Without special scrutiny, credit profiles created with the scheme are not immediately distinguishable from other newly created, legitimate files.

Customers are told to use their real name and date of birth, but to avoid listing any addresses or phone numbers they've used in the past. They're also told to avoid any other information that connects the new, clean credit profile with the old, damaged one.

Experts say the fraud will be difficult to stop because it's so easily concealed and targets such vulnerable people. Other than checking with the credit bureaus to see if there is a credit file associated with your child's Social Security number, the Social Security Administration and the FTC said there are no specific tools for safeguarding the number.

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