

Farm Credit Administration

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INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM



August 17, 2000

To: The Chief Executive Officer
All Farm Credit System Institutions

From: Roland E. Smith, Director /s/
Office of Examination

Subject: Identity Theft Advisory

Attached is an advisory (Letter No.: 00-CU-02) issued by the National Credit Union Administration about identity theft in the financial marketplace. As noted in the advisory, the Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act of 1998 (Act) supplements existing laws that criminalize fraud by specifically addressing misappropriation of another's identity for criminal purposes. This includes the theft and misuse of personal identifying information such as name, date of birth, credit card number, or Social Security number. Identity theft occurs when someone obtains a consumer's personal identifying information and uses the data to open new charge accounts, order goods, or borrow money.

Many consumers have been victimized by identity theft already, and the number of victims is rising considerably. The advisory contains some valuable suggestions to protect your customers and employees from identity theft. In addition, victims of identity theft may need help in determining steps they should take to ease the damage to their credit, reputation, or other personal considerations. You should refer them to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The FTC can provide information on the steps to take to inform credit reporting agencies, credit issuers, law enforcement authorities, and other agencies of improper use of personal identifying information. The FTC also will provide the public with educational information recommending steps to take to prevent individuals from becoming victims of identity theft. Victims may call the FTC Consumer Response Center (1-877-FTC-HELP) or visit its Web site at www.consumer.gov/idtheft.

If your institution suspects a violation under the Act, you should file a criminal referral as outlined in the *FCA Examination Manual*, EM-640, Criminal Referrals. Many states have passed identity theft legislation or have such legislation pending. Victims of identity theft also may report such fraudulent activity to state or local law enforcement agencies, which have authority to investigate these violations.

If you have any questions about this document, please call Thomas J. Holland, Director, Special Examination and Supervision Division, Office of Examination, at (703) 883-4483, or write to him on the Internet at e-mail address *hollandt@fca.gov*.

Attachment