



**Sandy Krestan**

License: 153369

Certified Mortgage Planner

The Krestan Team at Fairway Independent Mortgage

Phone: 602-820-5166

BK 0118867

[TheKrestanTeam@Fairwaymc.com](mailto:TheKrestanTeam@Fairwaymc.com)

[www.SandyKrestan.com](http://www.SandyKrestan.com)



## Identity Theft: Protect Your Financial Future

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) estimates that as many as 9-10 million Americans have their identities stolen each year. This means that you or someone you know may have been victimized by some form of identity theft in the past or will likely experience some form of this crime in the future.

Identity theft occurs when personal information, such as your Social Security number or credit card numbers, are used without your permission to make purchases, obtain a credit card or other account in your name.

Identity theft costs the average victim nearly \$4,000. And, in addition to the dollar cost, it takes average victims as much as 175 hours of personal time and effort to fix the damage and repair their credit. This does not include any potential increases in interest rates from creditors and insurance companies, where the financial impact can be even more dramatic, especially if the theft is left undetected. According to the FTC, it takes an average of 12-24 months for most consumers to even notice that a problem exists. And by then, it's too late. How can you protect yourself from the dangers of identity theft? Here are some suggestions.



### Don't Give It Away!

Avoid falling prey to what are known as phishing scams, both over the phone and through email. In a phishing scam, identity thieves pretend to be someone from your bank or credit institutions and simply ask you for your personal information. If someone contacts you and requests any personal information, don't give it to them. A financial institution or large company will rarely use email to obtain this kind of information. In fact, your bank and your creditors already have your information from when you originally opened the account. Verify who is requesting the data and why, and then call the institution yourself. One extra phone call could save you a lot of money and aggravation.

### Stay off the Pharm!

While phishing enables thieves to pilfer information from you, pharming is another kind of scam that takes the deception to the next level. Pharming is the process of hijacking your computer and stealing your personal information. A pharming site is designed to look just like the site you're trying to visit. However, enter your information on this fake site and not only can the site track your moves within it, it may also direct your computer to give up other personal information at a later time.

Be sure you are visiting the correct site, that the address is correct in the toolbar. Never enter a site through a pop-up advertisement window, and always be cautious before you sign in to any site. Often on these fake sites, you'll find unusual graphics, colors, or misspelled words - telltale signs that someone is trying to pharm your information.

### Opt-out of Special Offers!

Visit [www.optoutprescreen.com](http://www.optoutprescreen.com) to cut down on the pre-approved offers from credit card and insurance companies that come in the mail. A lot of identity thieves do things the old-fashioned way: they rummage through your trash and collect your information. Be sure to shred any documents that contain your personal information before you throw it away.

### Conduct a Credit Check-up!

Visit [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) to obtain a free credit report every 12 months. Review all three of your credit reports and look for any suspicious activity, unusual or inaccurate names or addresses, or any inquiries that were done without your knowledge. If you even suspect that your identity may have been stolen or compromised, call us right away. We'll pull your credit and review it together.

