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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IDENTITY THEFT PREVENTION AND AWARENESS MONTH

Boise, Idaho – The Idaho Department of Finance (IDOF) is pleased to recognize the month of December as Identity Theft Prevention and Awareness Month. Identity theft is defined as a crime where a consumer’s personal or financial information is illegally obtained to commit fraud. As the holiday season is in full swing, it is important to stay vigilant when it comes to protecting your identity, especially in the digital space.

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), 1.1 million identity theft reports were filed in 2022 and it is expected to increase by the end of 2023. The most common form of identity theft was credit card fraud. The FTC received 441,882 complaints of stolen information pertaining to credit card misuse. Idaho ranked number 40 out of 50 states for Identity Theft with 2,225 reports in this category last year. ¹

“As identity theft continues to rise, it is important consumers be proactive to protect themselves, especially in the digital space where many thefts can occur behind a screen,” said Patricia Perkins Director of the Idaho Department of Finance.

Reduce your risk of identity theft by taking the following precautions:

- **Monitor credit reports & freeze cards upon noticing suspicious activity.** Regularly reviewing credit card spending and bank statements allows consumers to identify any unusual charges or transactions. If there is any suspicious activity or spending, immediately freeze the impacted card and alert the issuing financial institution to issue a new card and investigate the charges.
- **Create strong and different passwords for accounts.** Creating strong passwords decreases the chances of thieves entering accounts. Strong passwords are normally eight or more characters that include numbers, special characters, and capitalized and lower-case letters. Avoid using personal information when creating any password. Along with strong passwords, it is important to create different passwords for accounts instead of sticking to just one or two.
- **Utilize two-step factor authentication.** Two-step factor authentication is an extra wall of protection for password security. Two-step factor authentication requires more than one identifier to unlock an account; this can be seen in the form of a special PIN, thumb or face ID, and security questions. Setting up this authentication for email, bank accounts, social media, and credit cards ensures the owner of the account is the only permitted user.

¹ https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/CSN-Data-Book-2022.pdf

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- **Shred documents that contain personal information.** Shredding documents that contain social security numbers, bank account numbers and a variety of other personal information is a strong practice to help avoid identity theft.
- **Be careful sharing personal information on social media.** Social media is a popular way to show one's personal life, especially through pictures and videos. Unfortunately, hackers can easily obtain personal information from social media sites and hack into any associated accounts. Never share your address, phone number, photos of personal IDs or full date of birth on social media.
- **Download and use antivirus protection software.** Antivirus software can keep electronics safe from viruses, malware and phishing attempts. The use of these software systems aids in the prevention, scanning, detecting and deleting of viruses that can be harmful to computers and smartphones. ²

Protecting your identity is crucial, especially during the month of December when online purchases are at an all-time high along with the demands of the holiday season. By following the recommendations in this release, individuals can decrease the risk of experiencing identity theft. IDOF encourages individuals who have experienced identity theft to file a report online at www.identitytheft.gov.

Consumers can obtain information about financial firms, professionals or products, as well as view more Department press releases and other information on the Internet at <http://finance.idaho.gov> or by contacting the Department at (208) 332-8000 or Idaho toll-free at 1-888-346-3378.

² <https://www.usnews.com/360-reviews/privacy/antivirus>