

ATTENTION

As many of you know, a lot of information is available on the Internet. But there sometimes can be too much information, especially when it is information about you or your family that could be potentially used in inappropriate ways.

Recently "Google" implemented a feature where a stranger can type your telephone number into the search bar and hit enter, and then they will be given a map to your house. You could imagine the possible implications from this, especially if you have children.

If this is something that concerns you, you can take steps to have your phone number removed or blocked---so that this does not occur at "Google".

In order to test whether your phone number is mapped, go to: www.google.com Type your phone number in the search bar (i.e. 555-555-1212) and hit enter.

If you want to **BLOCK** "Google" from divulging your private information, simply click on your name. This process may take up to 48-hours. If you are unlisted in the phone book, you might not be in there, but it is a good idea just to check. If your number does come up if you hit map, follow the same process above.

A corporate attorney sent the following out to the employees in his company. I pass it along, for your information.

The next time you order checks have only your initials (instead of first name) and last name put on them. If someone takes your check book they will not know if you sign your checks with just your initials or your first name but your bank will know how you sign your checks.

Put your work phone # on your checks instead of your home phone.

If you have a PO Box use that instead of your home address.

If you do not have a PO Box use your work address. Never have your SS# printed on your checks -- you can add it if it is necessary. But if you have it printed, anyone can get it.

Place the contents of your wallet on a photocopy! machine, do both sides of each license, credit card, etc. You will know what you had in your wallet and all of the account numbers and phone numbers to call and cancel. Keep the photocopy in a safe place. I also carry a photocopy of my passport when I travel either here or abroad.

We've all heard horror stories about fraud that's committed on us in stealing a name, address, Social Security number, credit cards, etc.

Unfortunately I, an attorney, have firsthand knowledge because my wallet was stolen last month. Within a week, the thief(s) ordered an expensive monthly cell phone package, applied for a VISA credit card, had a credit line approved to buy a Gateway computer, received a PIN number from DMV to change my driving record information on-line, and more.

But here's some critical information to limit the damage in case this happens to you or someone you know We have been told we should cancel our credit cards immediately. But the key is having the toll free numbers and your card numbers handy so you know whom to call. Keep those where you can find them easily.

File a police report immediately in the jurisdiction where it was stolen, this proves to credit providers you were diligent, and is a first step toward an investigation (if there ever is one).

But here's what is perhaps most important: (I never even thought to do this) Call the three national credit reporting organizations immediately to place a fraud alert on your name and Social Security number. I had never heard of doing that until advised by a bank that called to tell me an application for credit was made over the Internet in my name. The alert means any company that checks your credit knows! Your information was stolen and they have to contact you by phone to authorize new credit.

By the time I was advised to do this, almost two weeks after the theft, all the damage had been done. There are records of all the credit checks initiated by the thieves' purchases, none of which I knew about before placing the alert. Since then, no additional damage has been done, and the thieves threw my wallet away this weekend (someone turned it in). It seems to have stopped them in their tracks.

The numbers are Equifax: 1-800-525-6285

Experian (formerly TRW): 1-888-397-3742

Trans Union: 1-800-680-7289

Social Security Administration (fraud line): 1-800-269-0271