



PO Box 8911 Madison, WI 53708-8911

Web site: <http://datcp.state.wi.us>

DATA PRIVACY DAY IS FRIDAY, JANUARY 28

Awareness is a Year Round Effort in Wisconsin

Release: January 25, 2011

**Contact: Brock Bergey
608-224-5007**

MADISON – In this day and age of digital technology, information is being shared like never before. But – when you stop and think about it – just *who* has access to that information and *what* are they doing with it?

The Wisconsin Office of Privacy Protection, part of the Bureau of Consumer Protection in the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, will observe “Data Privacy Day” on Friday, January 28. Governor Scott Walker has issued a proclamation in recognition of this statewide educational effort to prevent identity theft.

“Wisconsin consumers and businesses need to be cautious when collecting, storing and sharing sensitive data,” said Michelle Reinen, Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection. “This includes personally identifiable information such as Social Security numbers, bank account information, and credit card numbers.”

“We strongly encourage consumers to regularly monitor their credit report,” Reinen added. “The start of a new year is a good time to get in the habit of checking your credit report. Federal law entitles consumers to one free report, from each of the three major credit reporting agencies, each year. This is one of the best ways to protect against identity theft.”

In addition, consumers, and business owners alike, should closely review bank and credit card statements – looking for unauthorized charges or withdrawals. Any discrepancies should immediately be reported to your bank or credit card company to prevent further financial damage.

Identity thieves can destroy a person’s financial reputation and cause endless stress with even the smallest piece of personally identifiable information. Nationwide, identity theft costs consumers and businesses millions of dollars in fraudulent charges each year, and can take years and cost thousands of dollars to recover.

Businesses are also harmed by identity theft and can be affected if sensitive data collected by them is not kept secure. The result of which can cost them not only money – but sometimes their reputation, as well. Businesses who adopt a privacy plan to address data security protect themselves as well as their consumers. The Office of Privacy Protection is here to assist businesses in developing privacy and incident response plans and offer ongoing support to integrate best practices into their business plan.

“Unfortunately, data protection and privacy laws can only go so far,” concluded Reinen. “Consumers need to understand the privacy risks they face in this networked-world and take the proper precautions to keep their information safe and secure.”

-MORE-

The Office of Privacy Protection (OPP) offers these identity theft prevention safeguards for consumers:

- **Pay attention to Internet security.** Install virus and spyware protection on your computer. Make sure your Internet browser security settings aren't too low.
- **Shred, shred, shred!** Shred unneeded bills, receipts, credit card offers and other items that contain personal or financial information like bank statements or canceled checks.
- **Never give out personal information.** Legitimate companies don't call or e-mail asking for personal information like account, credit card, or Social Security numbers. Don't give out that information unless you initiate the contact.
- **More consumer information:** <http://privacy.wi.gov/factsheets/pdf/IDTheftConsumerTips636.pdf>.

Business owners should follow these OPP-recommended privacy guidelines:

- **Take stock.** Know what personally identifiable information you have in your files and store on your computers.
- **Scale down and lock it.** Keep only the information you need for your business and protect that information as if it were your own.
- **Pitch it.** Properly dispose of sensitive information when it is no longer needed.
- **More business information:** <http://privacy.wi.gov/business/business.html>.

For additional privacy protection-related information visit www.privacy.wi.gov or call the Wisconsin Office of Privacy Protection at 1-800-422-7128.

Editor's Note: In addition to the PDF version of this news release, I have included two other attachments: 1) Governor Scott Walker's Data Privacy Day Proclamation; and 2) The 2011 Data Privacy Day graphic element for your publication/broadcast use.

-###-