



WRIGHT & KIMBROUGH

REPORT

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Personal Protection

Protecting Yourself after the Equifax Data Breach

AT THE END of July, data thieves penetrated computer systems at Equifax, one of the three major credit bureaus, and potentially stole personal credit information on as many as 143 million U.S. customers.

Compromised data includes Social Security numbers, birth dates, addresses and driver's license numbers.

The thieves also stole credit card numbers on roughly 209,000 Americans, and some charge-dispute data, including personally identifying documents on about 182,000 U.S. residents.

This data breach, which may affect as many as two out of three American adults with a credit score, is the largest known data breach to date.

The data that was compromised seems sufficient for criminals to open fraudulent credit accounts and even obtain someone else's federal tax return, given current procedures.

What to do

See if you were affected. Equifax has created a website that you can visit to find out whether your personal data is among the information believed to have been stolen. The credit bureau has also established a hotline that consumers can call to find out whether their data may have been compromised.

Website: equifaxsecurity2017.com/potential-impact

Data breach hotline: 866-447-7559

Get insurance – It is still easy and affordable to buy insurance against this kind of loss.

Many people have chosen to purchase separate policies specifically designed to protect them from damages arising from identity theft. In other cases, ID theft protection is available as a rider to your homeowner's or renters' insurance policies.

For information about adding this coverage to your existing homeowner's or renter's policy, or to set up stand-alone coverage, call us today.

Enroll in credit monitoring – Credit monitoring services watch your credit for suspicious activities. Equifax is waving credit monitoring fees for one year for consumers potentially affected by the breach.

What insurance covers

Common covered Items include:

- Cash reimbursement for direct fraud losses
- Cost of credit monitoring
- Lost time off work (spent dealing with banks, creditors, and so on)
- Dedicated credit-repair case workers
- Mailing and notarizing costs
- Legal assistance, both in recovering your damages and fighting lawsuits from creditors that may be brought against you as a result of the theft of your identity
- Court fees
- Audit assistance
- Fees from financial institutions incurred as a result of the identity fraud.

However, you will still need to pay a small fee to enroll in credit reporting at TransUnion and Experian.

Check your credit report – You can get a free credit report from each of the

See 'Enroll' on page 2



CONTACT US



If you have any questions regarding any of these articles or have a coverage question, please call us at:

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Homeowner's Coverage

Lightning Damage Claims Increase Losses Decrease

IN 2016, the number of home insurance claims following electrical surges and lightning strikes rose from the previous year's total.

While the total claim toll increased, the average amount paid per claim decreased. This means that the overall severity of such incidents was lower.

Researchers at the Insurance Information Institute said that the total amount paid out in claims from lightning strikes or electrical surges was \$825 million in 2016.

More than 100,000 policyholders received money for damages, but not all claims were eligible for payment.

The total number of paid and unpaid claims was almost 110,000. The claim number increase was less than 10% from the previous two years, and the overall loss per claim decreased by more than 10% in comparison with data from 2007.

Researchers said that over 50% of the claims cited electrical surge damage.

Also, transformer power surges were commonly cited as causes of major damages.

Lightning-related claims were most common in the South. Florida led the nation with the most lightning damage claims, and Texas, Georgia and Louisiana followed.

Coverage

A standard home insurance policy covers damage caused by lightning or a fire after an electrical surge. In many cases,

the electrical wiring catches fire after a power surge with or without lightning.

Some home insurance policies include coverage specifically for items damaged following a lightning strike. Appliances, computers, phone systems, electrical foundations, electronics and electrical fixtures are usually included in such policies.

Although the safety awareness week for lightning takes place each June, the Insurance Information Institute and the Lightning Protection Institute work together all year to remind homeowners across the nation to install adequate lightning protection systems in their homes.

While people in Southern states face higher risks, lightning can strike and cause severe damage anywhere.

Protection

With a lightning protection system in place, dangerous currents are directed away from valuable fixtures and appliances. Lightning protection systems include a special conductor path that harnesses and grounds lightning strikes.

Lightning produces supercharged currents of electricity. Experts recommend systems that are compliant with NFPA guidelines. Insurers also recommend the use of these valuable protection systems, and they can provide suggestions for where to find a reliable system.

To learn more about protecting property from lightning strikes and electrical surges, give us a call. ❖

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Enroll in Credit Monitoring, Check Your Credit Report

three bureaus once per year by visiting www.annualcreditreport.com.

Freeze your credit – This will effectively block any credit checks on your identity – by lenders, employers or anyone else – until you lift the freeze. This will make it difficult for thieves to gain from stealing your identity.

Equifax is not charging customers to put a freeze on their credit for the time being, due to the data breach. However, to

be effective, customers would have to have TransUnion and Experian freeze their credit, as well. That costs \$5 to \$10 per bureau, with specifics varying by state.

Place a fraud alert – This is less drastic than freezing your credit, and may cause less inconvenience. A fraud alert notifies lenders running your credit report that you have been the victim of identity theft or a data breach – prompting them, hopefully, to investigate further. ❖

Landlord Basics

Rules for Fixing Problems, Entering a Rental Unit

IF YOU OWN a rental property, you should make necessary repairs to rental units to avoid problems with tenants, damage to your property and incurring a personal liability.

Heating, plumbing and cooling issues should be addressed within 24 hours, with heating and cooling especially important in extreme winter or summer temperatures.

However, landlords must provide written notice of intent to enter the premises 24 hours in advance, unless there is a serious emergency such as a fire or a burst pipe.

Landlords are required by law to maintain habitable dwellings. This means that weatherproofing, water, heat, electricity, plumbing and sanitary water are all necessary. Also, the building should be structurally safe.

Housing and plumbing codes in different municipalities have their own standards for ventilation, light and wiring. Most cities require smoke detectors in every home as well, and some cities have rules for locks and keys of rental units.

A local housing authority or fire department should have detailed information.

When landlords do not make necessary repairs after a tenant reports a legitimate problem, the tenant has several options. Although rules vary from state to state, the choices typically include the following:

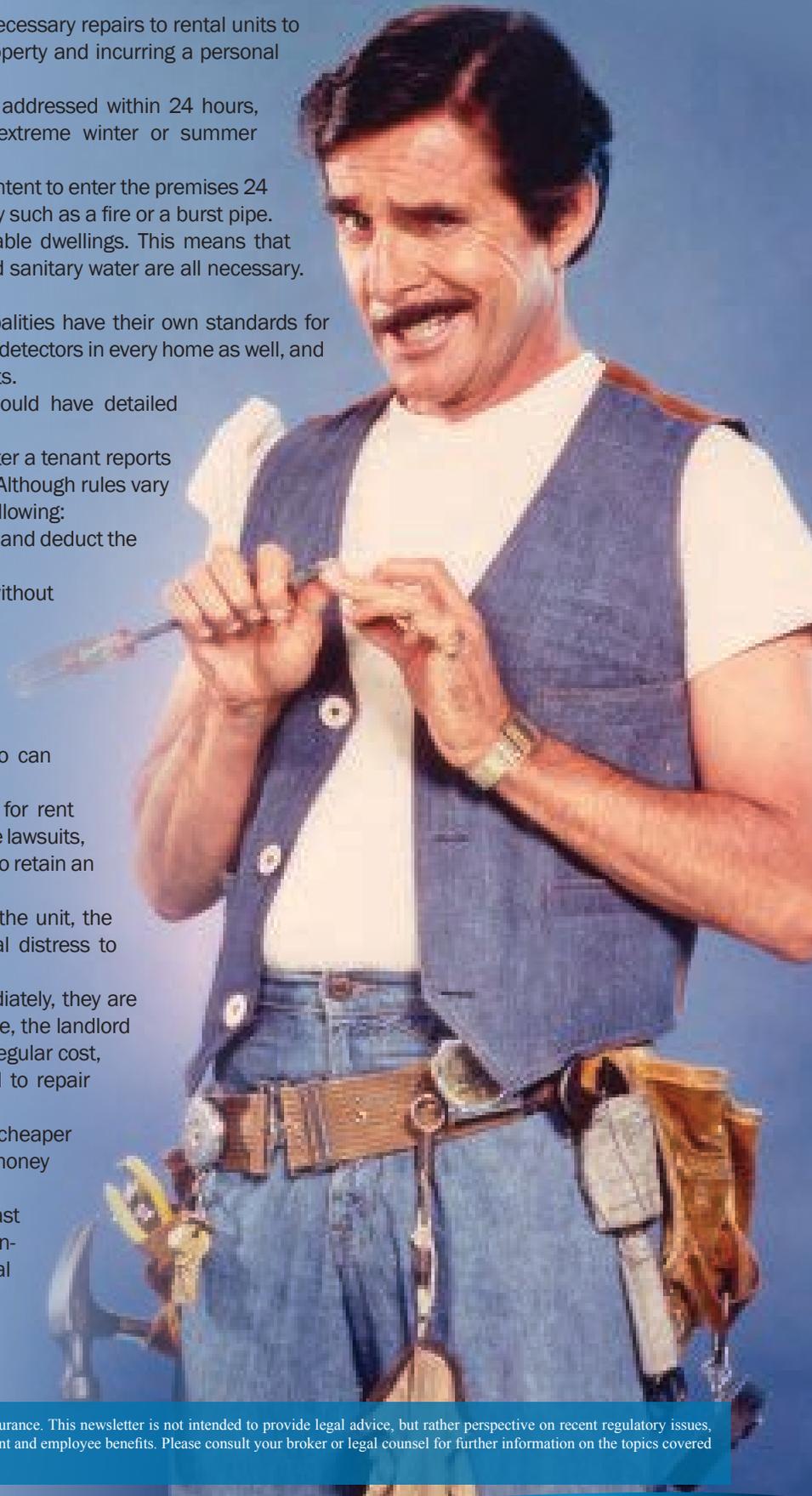
- The tenant can hire someone to fix the problem and deduct the amount from his or her rent.
- The tenant may choose to pay less rent without remedying the problem.
- The tenant may withhold all rent until the problem is resolved by the landlord.
- The tenant may break the lease and move out.
- The tenant may call a building inspector, who can order the landlord to repair the unit.
- Tenants also have the right to sue landlords for rent refunds. However, they may not always win these lawsuits, and it is usually too expensive for many people to retain an attorney.
- If there are severe substandard conditions in the unit, the tenant may sue for everything from emotional distress to discomfort.

If a landlord cannot afford to fix a problem immediately, they are better off extending an offer to the tenant. For example, the landlord can offer to reduce the next month's rent to half the regular cost, or offer to deduct the amount of the parts required to repair something from the tenant's rent.

If the tenant is able to fix the problem and parts are cheaper than hiring a professional, this is a good way to save money and keep the tenant happy.

Always remember to provide ample notice at least 24 hours in advance of entering a property for a non-emergency issue. Failing to do so could cause legal problems for a landlord.

To learn more about renting a property and the necessary insurance coverage, give us a call. ❖



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Protect Your Home With a Smart Doorbell

A MAN WALKS up to a home's front door and places a cardboard box in front of it. He taps a few keys on his mobile device and leaves. The woman who owns the house watches and then brings the package inside quickly.

Two people going door-to-door in a neighborhood ring a doorbell. The homeowner informs them that he cannot be interrupted, and they leave.

In both of these situations, the homeowners may have been upstairs or in the basement, or possibly not home at all. However, they were able to monitor the delivery and respond to the visitors because they had installed smart doorbells in their homes.

A smart doorbell is one example of the "Internet of things," non-computer devices connected to the Internet.

It contains a camera and microphone that connect to a smartphone or tablet. It allows a homeowner to see who is approaching the front door without having to be there to answer it. In addition to notifying the homeowner when someone is ringing the doorbell, some models offer features such as:

- Video recording and storage in the cloud
- Motion detection
- The ability to take snapshots
- Live streaming

Advantages

If a delivery is expected, the homeowner can learn immediately when the package has been delivered and can quickly retrieve it.

The doorbell can be answered from anywhere. A homeowner in the middle of a task can respond to a ring without stopping.

Solicitors and proselytizers can be screened without the homeowner having to physically answer the door.

Homeowners can share videos with their neighbors to warn them of suspicious activities occurring in the area.

Some doorbells store videos in the cloud for a few weeks, allowing homeowners to retrieve recordings after an incident occurs.

Some also create logs of all activities, including doorbell rings and motion detections.

In addition to deterring unwanted visitors and permitting homeowners to more quickly secure deliveries, a smart doorbell with recording capabilities can assist law enforcement in apprehending burglars.

This also makes it more likely that stolen property will be recovered. These features should help prevent and reduce property losses, making these homes more attractive to insurance companies.

Homeowner's insurance discounts for smart doorbells are not widely available yet, but it is expected that insurers will compete for homes that have them in the future. This should result in lower premiums for their owners.

Vendors of smart doorbells include Ring, Chui, SkyBell, Vivent and August. Their products are available online and from big box retailers. Prices vary according to the number and sophistication of features; they run from less than \$50 to as much as \$600. Many vendors offer installation for an additional fee.

The Internet of things is giving our homes vastly more capabilities than they've ever had before.

Devices such as smart doorbells can help homeowners protect their homes and belongings even when they are not home, and can be a wise investment for many people. ❖

