

Credit Freeze FAQ's from CIS

What is a credit freeze? A credit freeze stops the credit file from being released and prevents accounts from being opened without consumer approval.

What are the exceptions for releasing information with an active credit freeze? The credit bureaus reserve the right to release information on frozen credit files to existing creditors and collection agencies (on behalf of existing accounts) for account review and collection purposes. Information may also be released for prescreening purposes defined by the Fair Credit Reporting Act. [Consumers may opt-out of prescreened offers.](#)

How is a credit freeze activated & deactivated? The consumer must activate & deactivate a credit freeze with each bureau individually. The consumer chooses a temporary or permanent time-frame for the credit freeze. A PIN number or authorization code is provided that can be used to lift the freeze temporarily. Refer to the credit bureau websites for more information:

Equifax: <https://www.equifax.com/personal/credit-report-services/credit-freeze>; 888-298-0045

Experian: <https://www.experian.com/freeze/center.html>; 888-397-3742

TransUnion: <https://www.transunion.com/credit-freeze>; 800-813-5604

In September 2018, [credit freeze fees were eliminated](#) & new regulations took effect.

Credit freezes generally have waiting periods for activation & deactivation (lifts) to take effect. Lifts may be in effect for a short, defined time-frame. Refresh pulls are also impacted by credit freezes.

What is a credit lock? A credit lock is a service provided by each of the 3 credit bureaus individually. A credit lock stops the credit file from being released. The primary difference between a credit lock & credit freeze is instant control. With a credit lock, the consumer can instantly un-lock & re-lock their credit file using online or smartphone access. Refer to the credit bureau websites for more information:

Equifax: <https://www.equifax.com/personal/education/credit/report/video/credit-report-lock-vs-credit-freeze>

Experian: <https://www.experian.com/consumer-products/creditlock.html>

TransUnion: <https://www.transunion.com/blog/identity-protection/difference-between-a-credit-lock-and-credit-freeze>

Credit freezes & locks are individual by person. Spouses must activate and deactivate services individually with each credit bureau.

What is credit monitoring? Credit monitoring delivers notification on credit changes, but does not stop the credit file from being released. Credit monitoring is provided by each credit bureau and by third-party services. It is important to note credit monitoring is most effective when done with all 3 credit bureaus to ensure notification of all credit inquiries, credit changes & credit pulls. Fees and services vary and must be researched with each individual service provider.

What is a fraud alert? A fraud alert informs creditors the consumer may have been a fraud victim and requires the consumer be contacted before making account changes, however information can still be released. There are different types of fraud alerts (initial, extended, active duty military). When a consumer initiates a fraud alert with one credit bureau, it will be shared with the other 2 credit bureaus.