

## Tax Identification Number’s “Identity Crisis”

Knowing who is signing the lease is not only smart business, but it is a requirement under the U.S. Patriot Act. The Department of Treasury’s Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) publishes a list of Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons, which apartment owners and managers are required to screen against; doing business with targeted foreign countries, terrorists, international narcotics traffickers and those engaged in activities related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction can lead to both civil and criminal penalties.

With the high rate of immigration into the United States, and the various forms of identification that are available, there is a growing concern among apartment owners and managers that they are not using the correct documentation.

### **Unacceptable**

Two forms of identification that recently have led to some confusion are the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), commonly referred to as the Personal Taxpayer I.D., and the Matricula Consular cards, also known as Mexican ID cards. Neither form requires verification of the declared identifier’s information, making them of little value in establishing correct identity.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) issues the ITIN to individuals who are required to have a personal taxpayer identification number for filing tax returns, but who do not have, and are not eligible to obtain, a Social Security Number (SSN) from the Social Security Administration. The ITIN is a nine-digit number (like the SSN) but always begins with the number nine and has a seven or eight in the fourth digit - for example, 9XX-7X-XXXX. The ITIN does not authorize work in the United States or provide eligibility for Social Security benefits. It merely provides a means to file tax returns.

The IRS issues ITINs regardless of immigration status, and ITINs are for federal tax reporting only. The IRS does not validate the authenticity of the information provided; therefore, it is invalid for identification outside the tax system.

Another form used for identification is the Matricula Consular card, which the government of Mexico issues through its various consulate offices in the United States. The official purpose of the card is to demonstrate that the bearer is a Mexican national living outside of Mexico.

In the past few years, the Mexican government has been marketing the use of this card aggressively, and now more than a dozen states accept it to issue a driver’s license. This, in turn, is used to create a credit identity. Recently there has been a dramatic increase in the use of these cards for credit granting by banks, credit card companies and even mortgage brokers.

There are some serious concerns about the Matricula Consular card. The U.S. Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of

Investigation (FBI) both have concluded that the Matricula Consular card is not a reliable form of identification because of the non-existence of any means of verifying the true identity of the cardholder.

The Mexican government often issues Matricula Consular cards with as little as the word of the person requesting one as proof of identity. The Mexican government has no centralized database to coordinate the issuance of Matricula Consular cards and, as a result, one person can provide several cards under different names.

All dated forms should not expire within the time of the proposed lease agreement term.

Apartment professionals, particularly those in states that border Canada or Mexico, are keenly aware of the additional importance of identification documents when leasing to non-U.S. citizens. However, an applicant’s true identity, regardless of legal status of residency, is essential for all meaningful resident screening and for compliance with the OFAC mandate.

## **ORCA ♦ WISDOM ♦**

Accept that some days you’re the pigeon, and some days you’re the statue.

## The #1 Most Reliable Way to Verify Employment...

Ask all applicants to provide you with their most recent pay stubs with year-to-date earnings listed *or* for new hires, you would want to see a letter of Intent-to-Hire listing wages to be earned. Photocopy this information and keep it in the tenant’s file.

Orca will also attempt to verify employment as listed on the application. We are unable to call the 900 # Employment Verification lines - the cost is prohibitive and the information provided does not include salary information.

### ***What people in the know are saying about Orca:***

“Today’s surprise box brought a smile to all when the orca whale was unwrapped! Thanks for all you do for us and our long association!”

- Cherie L. Lindholm RE—Orcas Island

## DETER \* DETECT \* DEFEND AVOID THEFT

*Deter identity thieves by safeguarding your information.*

**Shred** financial documents and paperwork with personal information before you discard them.

**Protect** your Social Security number. Don't carry your social security card in your wallet or write your Social Security number on a check. Give it out only if absolutely necessary or ask to use another identifier.

**Don't give out** personal information on the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet unless you know who you are dealing with.

**Never click** on links sent in unsolicited emails; instead, type in a web address you know. Use firewalls, anti-spy ware, and anti-virus software to protect your home computer; keep them up-to-date. Visit [OnGuardOnline.gov](http://OnGuardOnline.gov) for more information.

**Don't use** an obvious password like your birth date, your mother's maiden name, or the last four digits of your Social Security number.

**Keep** your personal information in a secure place at home, especially if you have roommates, employ outside help, or are having work done in your house.

*Detect suspicious activity by routinely monitoring your financial accounts and billing statements.*

**Be alert to signs that require immediate attention:**

- \* Bills that do not arrive as expected
- \* Unexpected credit cards of account statements
- \* Denials of credit for no apparent reason
- \* Calls or letters about purchases you did not make

### Inspect:

**Your credit report.** Credit reports contain information about you, including what accounts you have and your bill paying history.

- The law requires the major nationwide consumer reporting companies-Equifax, Experian, and Trans Union-to give you a free copy of your credit report each year if you ask for it.
- Visit [www.AnnualCreditReport.com](http://www.AnnualCreditReport.com) or call 1-877-322-8228, a service created by these three companies, to order your free credit reports each year. You also can write: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281.

**Your financial statements.** Review financial accounts and billing statements regularly, looking for charges you did not make.

*Detect against ID theft as soon as you suspect it.*

**Place a "Fraud Alert" on your credit reports, and review the reports carefully.** The alert tells creditors to follow certain procedures before they open new accounts in your name or make changes to your existing accounts. The three nationwide consumer reporting companies have toll-free numbers for placing an

initial 90-day fraud alert; a call to one company is sufficient:

- Equifax:** 1-800-525-6285
- Experian:** 1-800-397-3742
- TransUnion:** 1-800-680-7289

Placing a fraud alert entitles you to free copies of your credit reports. Look for inquiries from companies you haven't contacted, accounts you didn't open, and debts on your accounts that you can't explain.

**Close accounts.** Close any accounts that have been tampered with or established fraudulently.

- Call the security fraud departments of each company where an account was opened or changed without your okay. Follow up in writing, with copies of supporting documents.
- Use the ID Theft Affidavit at [FTC.gov/idtheft](http://FTC.gov/idtheft) to support your written statement.
- Ask for verification that the disputed account has been closed and the fraudulent debts discharged.
- Keep copies of documents and records of your conversations about the theft.

**File a police report.** File a report with law enforcement officials to help you with creditors who may want proof of the crime.

**Report the theft to the Federal Trade Commission.** Your report helps law enforcement officials across the country in their investigations.

**Online:** [ftc.gov/idtheft](http://ftc.gov/idtheft)

**By phone:** 1-877-ID THEFT (438-4338)

**By mail:** Identity Theft Clearinghouse, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, H-130, Washington, DC 20580

To learn more about ID theft and how to deter, detect, and defend against it, visit [ftc.gov/idtheft](http://ftc.gov/idtheft). Or request copies of ID theft resources by writing to:

**Consumer Response Center**

Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, H-130  
Washington, DC 20580

### PROPERTIES FOR SALE IN LAKE CHELAN

**Contact: Dan and Jan Folsom**

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**Our Office will be closed on  
September 1st in  
Celebration of Labor Day.**