

Safeguard Your Military ID During Credit Card Transactions

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The US Army North Provost Marshal advises that photocopying of military ID is a violation of federal law.⁽¹⁾ The photocopying of U.S. Government identification cards is a violation of Title 18, U.S. Code Part I, Chapter 33, Section 701 and punishable by fine and imprisonment.

Military ID also contains the complete Social Security Number (SSN) of the service member. Military personnel should avoid using their military identification for other than military purposes. It is especially important that military personnel avoid presenting their military ID in conjunction with a credit card or other financial transactions. Providing both your SSN and credit card information during a retail transaction increases the likelihood that you will become the victim of identity theft! Furthermore, any requirement for you to show ID as a condition of making a credit card purchase is a violation of policy, and may be a violation of state law.

The major credit card companies advise that it is a violation of the terms of their contract with merchants for any merchant to require that you present ID as a condition of making a credit card purchase. Mastercard, for example, wants cardholders to report merchant violations, and provides a web-site for doing so at: <http://www.mastercard.us/support/merchant-violations.html>

Some businesses claim that asking you for ID as part of a credit card transaction helps to protect you against fraudulent use of your credit card. This is not true. Consider the facts that Mastercard and Visa are multi-billion-dollar, international, companies and that they spend millions of dollars to fight credit card fraud. If presenting ID made you safer in a credit card transaction it would be required, or at least strongly recommended, by the major credit card companies. As we have seen however, just the opposite is true. Presenting ID during a credit card transaction puts you at risk, and thus the credit card companies prohibit merchants from requiring that you present ID as a condition of making a purchase with your credit card.

Unfortunately, not all merchants play by the rules. Some, apparently, haven't even bothered to read them!



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MASTERCARD® WORLDWIDE Merchant Violation

MERCHANT VIOLATION

Provide the following information only if you have experienced any of the four merchant violations listed below at a merchant/retailer location displaying the MasterCard logo.

*** Required**

Your Information

* Your Name:

* Your E-mail Address:

* Comments: (maximum 5,000 characters)

Characters left:

Merchant Information

* Name:

* Address 1:

Address 2:

* City:

* State:

* Zip Code:

- In order to make a MasterCard purchase, the merchant/retailer required a minimum or maximum amount.
- The merchant/retailer is adding a charge for using your MasterCard card.
- The merchant/retailer required identification.
- A merchant/retailer displaying the MasterCard decal in their window refused to accept MasterCard card.

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The Privacy Rights Clearinghouse⁽²⁾ quotes from the Mastercard and Visa rules manuals, which state: Mastercard - "A Merchant must not refuse to complete a Transaction solely because a Cardholder... refuses to provide additional identification information..." Visa - "A Merchant must not require a Cardholder, to provide any supplementary Cardholder information as a condition for honoring a Visa Card or Visa Electron Card..."

Some people believe that writing "See ID" or a similar notation on the signature panel of their credit cards (and thus requiring merchants to check their ID) helps to protect them against fraudulent use of their credit card. As we have seen, providing the additional information contained on your ID during the course of a retail credit card transaction actually increases the likelihood of you being targeted for identity theft. According to Creditcards.Com⁽³⁾ "when a merchant sees "See ID" on the back of a card instead of a signature, that card should not be processed." Both Visa and Mastercard have a zero liability policy when it comes to fraudulent use of your card. Visa says: "Visa's Zero Liability policy is our guarantee that you won't be held responsible for fraudulent charges made with your card or account information." Likewise Mastercard's policy states:

"Zero liability applies to purchases made in the store, over the telephone or made online. As a MasterCard cardholder you will not be responsible in the event of unauthorized purchases provided that the following preconditions are met:

- Your account is in good standing.
- You have exercised reasonable care in safeguarding your card from any unauthorized use..."

It is important to note that "reasonable care in safeguarding your card from any unauthorized use" will certainly include complying with the terms of your contract with the credit card company (all that fine print that comes with your new credit card). This means that to maintain your zero liability you should properly sign your credit cards, and that you should refuse to provide additional identification during retail credit card transactions.

Finally, a few things to remember that will help to protect you against fraud and identity theft:

- Do not use your military ID for other than military purposes.

- Never allow anyone to make a copy of your military ID - it's illegal to do so.
- Avoid showing ID or providing additional identifying information during a credit card transaction - it puts you at risk.
- Properly sign all your credit cards. This helps you maintain zero liability in case they are stolen.
- If you find that your credit card has been lost or stolen, report it immediately to the issuer:

American Express -- 1-800-992-3404

Discover Card -- 1-800-Discover (1-800-347-2683)

Mastercard Global Service -- 1-800-MasterCard (1-800-627-8372)

Visa Global Customer Assistance -- 1-800-847-2911

References

- (1) <http://www.army.mil/-news/2009/10/07/28452-photocopying-military-cac-ids-a-violation-of-federal-law/>
- (2) <http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs15-mt.htm#2a>
- (3) <http://www.creditcards.com/credit-card-news/sign-or-write-see-ID-1282.php>