

## **Don't Let Mail "Fishing" Thieves Ruin Your Good Cheer this Holiday Season!**

The season of giving is upon us! As the holidays approach, many of us will be exchanging gifts with family, friends and loved ones. This may include gift checks, personal checks and gift cards sent through the mail. It is important to understand the risks these holiday tidings can bring. In recent weeks, instances of mail theft have been reported throughout the country. Thieves are "fishing" for checks as well as gift cards in the mail. This doesn't mean you shouldn't use the mail, but you should be aware of steps you can take to protect your mail and ensure your gifts are getting to their intended recipients.

How are thieves getting their hands on your mail? One way is with a bead of glue placed inside the mailbox flap to snare envelopes before they fall into the mailbox chamber. Even when the mail makes it inside the chamber, it is still vulnerable with the use of a "fishing pole." Mail "fishing" involves altering a fishing rod with a sticky substance on the tip and lowering it into the collection to "catch" some mail

The U.S. Postal Service takes mail fishing seriously and is working to prevent it by installing new mailboxes with smaller doors so that thieves can't fish as easily.

One of the best ways to protect your mail is to drop it off within the post office. If you have to use a public mailbox not within a post office, try to drop off your mail just before pickup time so it doesn't sit unattended for a long time making it more vulnerable to fishing thieves. You should also seek out mail boxes in well-lit or in high-traffic areas that thieves would have a hard-time fishing from without being noticed. And if you see something suspicious around a mailbox, report it.

At Merck Employees Federal Credit Union we take every precaution to safeguard your information. That is why we offer online services that can make you safer from mail fishing and other scams. One service we highly recommend is eStatements. This service allows you to view your credit union account statements electronically and securely at your convenience and eliminates the vulnerability of them sitting in a physical mail box. Not only are eStatements safe, but members who use eStatements earn additional interest on their Share Draft accounts. Another step you can take to protect your information and save valuable time is to utilize the credit union's online Bill Pay service to pay your bills. This convenient service is fast and free when you have eStatements!

Don't let the mail fishing Grinch ruin your holiday season! Take steps to protect yourself!