situations involving Federal criminal violations requiring immediate attention, such as when a reportable violation is ongoing:

- Taking appropriate steps to contain and control the incident to prevent further unauthorized access to or use of customer information, for example, by monitoring, freezing, or closing affected accounts, while preserving records and other evidence; and
- Notifying customers when warranted.

2. Where an incident of unauthorized access to customer information involves customer information systems maintained by an institution’s service providers, it is the responsibility of the financial institution to notify the institution’s customers and regulator. However, an institution may authorize or contract with its service provider to notify the institution’s customers or regulator on its behalf.

III. CUSTOMER NOTICE

Financial institutions have an affirmative duty to protect their customers’ information against unauthorized access or use. Notifying customers of a security incident involving the unauthorized access or use of the customer’s information in accordance with the standard set forth below is a key part of that duty. Timely notification of customers is important to manage an institution’s reputation risk. Effective notice also may reduce an institution’s legal risk, assist in maintaining good customer relations, and enable the institution’s customers to take steps to protect themselves against the consequences of identity theft. When customer notification is warranted, an institution may not forgo notifying its customers of an incident because the institution believes that it may be potentially embarrassed or inconvenience by doing so.

A. Standard for Providing Notice

When a financial institution becomes aware of an incident of unauthorized access to sensitive customer information, the institution should conduct a reasonable investigation to promptly determine the likelihood that the information has been or will be misused. If the institution determines that misuse of its information about a customer has occurred or is reasonably possible, it should notify the affected customer as soon as possible. Customer notice may be delayed if an appropriate law enforcement agency determines that notification will interfere with a criminal investigation and provides the institution with a written request for the delay. However, the institution should notify its customers as soon as notification will no longer interfere with the investigation.

1. Sensitive Customer Information

Under the Guidelines, an institution must protect against unauthorized access to or use of customer information that could result in substantial harm or inconvenience to any customer. Substantial harm or inconvenience is most likely to result from improper access to sensitive customer information because this type of information is most likely to be misused, as in the commission of identity theft. For purposes of this Guidance, sensitive customer information means a customer’s name, address, or telephone number, in conjunction with the customer’s social security number, driver’s license number, account number, credit or debit card number, or a personal identification number or password that would permit access to the customer’s account. Sensitive customer information also includes any combination of components of customer information that would allow someone to log onto or access the customer’s account, such as user name and password or account number.

2. Affected Customers

If a financial institution, based upon its investigation, can determine from its logs or other data precisely which customers’ information has been improperly accessed, it may limit notification to those customers with regard to whom the institution determines that misuse of their information has occurred or is reasonably possible. However, there may be situations where the institution determines that a group of files has been accessed improperly, but is unable to identify which specific customers’ information has been accessed. If the circumstances of the unauthorized access lead the institution to determine that misuse of the information is reasonably possible, it should notify all customers in the group.

B. Content of Customer Notice

1. Customer notice should be given in a clear and conspicuous manner. The notice should describe the incident in general terms and the type of customer information that was the subject of unauthorized access or use. It also should generally describe what

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the institution has done to protect the customers’ information from unauthorized access. In addition, it should include a telephone number that customers can call for further information and assistance. The notice also should remind customers of the need to remain vigilant over the next twelve to twenty-four months, and to promptly report incidents of suspected identity theft to the institution. The notice should include the following additional items, when appropriate:

a. A recommendation that the customer review account statements and immediately report any suspicious activity to the institution;

b. A description of fraud alerts and an explanation of how the customer may place a fraud alert in the customer’s consumer reports to put the customer’s creditors on notice that the customer may be a victim of fraud;

c. A recommendation that the customer periodically obtain credit reports from each nationwide credit reporting agency and have information relating to fraudulent transactions deleted;

d. An explanation of how the customer may obtain a credit report free of charge; and

e. Information about the availability of the FTC’s online guidance regarding steps a consumer can take to protect against identity theft. The notice should encourage the customer to report any incidents of identity theft to the FTC, and should provide the FTC’s Web site address and toll-free telephone number that customers may use to obtain the identity theft guidance and report suspected incidents of identity theft.

2. The Agencies encourage financial institutions to notify the nationwide consumer reporting agencies prior to sending notices to a large number of customers that include contact information for the reporting agencies.

C. Delivery of Customer Notice

Customer notice should be delivered in any manner designed to ensure that a customer can reasonably be expected to receive it. For example, the institution may choose to contact all customers affected by telephone or by mail, or by electronic mail for those customers for whom it has a valid e-mail address and who have agreed to receive communications electronically.

Subpart C—Fair Credit Reporting

§ 391.20 Examples.

The examples in this subpart are not exclusive. Compliance with an example, to the extent applicable, constitutes compliance with this subpart. Examples in a section illustrate only the issue described in the section and do not illustrate any other issue that may arise in this subpart.

§ 391.21 Disposal of consumer information.

(a) Scope. This section applies to State savings associations whose deposits are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (defined as “you”).

(b) In general. You must properly dispose of any consumer information that you maintain or otherwise possess in accordance with the Interagency Guidelines Establishing Information Security Standards, to the extent that you are covered by the scope of the Guidelines.

(c) Rule of construction. Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

(1) Require you to maintain or destroy any record pertaining to a consumer that is not imposed under any other law; or

(2) Alter or affect any requirement imposed under any other provision of law to maintain or destroy such a record.

§ 391.22 Duties regarding the detection, prevention, and mitigation of identity theft.

(a) Scope. This section applies to a financial institution or creditor that is a State savings association whose deposits are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

(b) Definitions. For purposes of this section and the appendix to subpart C of part 391, the following definitions apply:

(1) Account means a continuing relationship established by a person with a
(c) Periodic identification of covered accounts. Each financial institution or creditor must periodically determine whether it offers or maintains covered accounts. As a part of this determination, a financial institution or creditor must conduct a risk assessment to determine whether it offers or maintains covered accounts described in paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section, taking into consideration:

(1) The methods it provides to open its accounts;

(2) The methods it provides to access its accounts; and

(3) Its previous experiences with identity theft.

(d) Establishment of an Identity Theft Prevention Program—(1) Program requirement. Each financial institution or creditor that offers or maintains one or more covered accounts must develop and implement a written Identity Theft Prevention Program (Program) that is designed to detect, prevent, and mitigate identity theft in connection with the opening of a covered account or any existing covered account. The Program must be appropriate to the size and complexity of the financial institution or creditor and the nature and scope of its activities.

(2) Elements of the Program. The Program must include reasonable policies and procedures to:

(i) Identify relevant Red Flags for the covered accounts that the financial institution or creditor offers or maintains, and incorporate those Red Flags into its Program;

(ii) Detect Red Flags that have been incorporated into the Program of the financial institution or creditor;

(iii) Respond appropriately to any Red Flags that are detected pursuant to paragraph (d)(2)(ii) of this section to prevent and mitigate identity theft; and

(iv) Ensure the Program (including the Red Flags determined to be relevant) is updated periodically, to reflect changes in risks to customers and to the safety and soundness of the financial institution or creditor from identity theft.

(e) Administration of the Program. Each financial institution or creditor that is required to implement a Program must provide for the continued