



New Identity Theft Survey Reveals Latest Count of Victims, Need for Greater Protection; First Data and Regions Team to Fight Back

DENVER & BIRMINGHAM, Ala., May 17, 2005 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- Incidents of phishing and identity theft continue to increase dramatically, according to an independent nationwide survey of consumers released today by electronic commerce and payments leader First Data Corp. (NYSE: FDC). The survey found that 6.8 percent of adults have been victimized by identity theft and a striking 43.4 percent of adults have received a "phishing" contact. Further, the study indicates that as many as 54 million Americans have been the victims of ID-related fraud.

Phishing is a growing form of attempted identity theft in which consumers are contacted via bogus e-mail messages that try to lure them into providing personal information such as their Social Security number and/or financial account information. Phishers, or fraudsters, may pose as financial institutions, credit card companies, retailers, government agencies or other entities with which consumers have a relationship.

"This new survey confirms that identity theft and phishing are national threats, and that consumers need help to fight back," said Debra Janssen, president, First Data Debit Services. "Close to 5 percent of phishing attempts are successful, despite significant efforts by the financial community to raise awareness and educate consumers about phishing.

"It's clear that more remains to be done," Janssen said.

Answering the call to action throughout its 15-state footprint in the South, Midwest and Texas is Regions Financial Corporation, which is teaming with First Data's STAR Network to distribute a series of radio and television public service announcements to help consumers recognize phishing schemes before they become victims. Regions, a STAR member, is one of the nation's Top 15 financial services providers and the parent company of Regions Bank and Union Planters Bank. The announcements, originally developed by STAR and the National Consumers League, can be viewed at www.STAR.com and www.phishinginfo.org.

"In our survey, we found that 60 percent of consumers reported having seen or heard public service announcements or educational materials about phishing," Janssen said. "We are pleased to work with our clients such as Regions to help drive that number up -- and to help fight this 21st century form of fraud."

William E. Askew, Regions executive vice president of consumer and business banking, said teaming with First Data's STAR Network was a next natural step for Regions, which was a founding member of the Identity Theft Assistance Center (ITAC), a non-profit cooperative industry initiative to help victims of identity theft by streamlining the recovery process. ITAC is sponsored by The Financial Services Roundtable and BITS, which represent 100 of the largest integrated financial services companies. Regions also works with the American Bankers Association on other efforts to combat identity theft.

"As we've said before, protecting our customers and the security of their financial information is an integral part of Regions' commitment to providing excellent quality customer service," Askew said. "The best way we can put the bad guys out of business is to educate people, and we are proud to take a lead role in this effort."

The research, conducted in late 2004 by Synovate on behalf of First Data's STAR Network, also measured Americans' level of concern about identity theft as compared with a range of other national issues. (Margin of error for 2,000 respondents is +/- 2.2 percent). The 2004 results revealed that 50 percent of consumers surveyed continue to be very/extremely concerned about identity theft, which is consistent with an earlier study that found that 51 percent of consumers were very/extremely concerned about identity theft (April 2003 STAR/Synovate survey). The 2004 survey results revealed that Americans' concern about identity theft ranks close in importance to terrorism within U.S. borders (53 percent), state of the economy (52 percent), and concern about unemployment (41 percent).

More than one-third of consumers surveyed (36.6 percent) reported that they have received a phishing e-mail, while 19 percent said they have received a phishing phone call. Of those consumers who said they were contacted by phishers, 5 percent trusted the phishers enough to provide the requested personal information. Of those who said they provided information, nearly half (45 percent) reported that the information was used to make an unauthorized transaction, open an account, or commit another type of identity theft. In the past year, this contributed to the approximately 2 million new identity theft victims from phishing alone.

The survey validates earlier studies by reporting nearly one-third (31 percent) of consumers contacted said that the phisher had posed as a financial institution, while one in 10 (9.6 percent) reported that the phisher had impersonated a credit card company. Other entities, such as retailers, mortgage or financial services companies, government agencies, Internet service

providers, or payments service companies, were represented to a lesser degree.

About Regions Financial Corporation

Regions Financial Corporation (NYSE: RF), headquartered in Birmingham, Ala., is a full-service provider of retail and commercial banking, securities brokerage, mortgage, and insurance products and services. With its merger with former Union Planters Corp. complete, Regions had assets of \$84.3 billion as of March 31, 2005, making it one of the nation's Top 15 financial services providers. Regions' banking subsidiaries, Regions Bank and Union Planters Bank, operate some 1,400 offices and a 1,700-ATM network across a 15-state geographic footprint in the South, Midwest and Texas. Its investment and securities brokerage, trust and asset management division, Morgan Keegan & Company Inc., provides services from more than 250 offices. Additional information about the new Regions, which is a member of both the Forbes and Fortune 500 and operates one of the top mortgage companies in the United States, can be found at www.regions.com.

About First Data

First Data Corp. (NYSE: FDC) is a leading provider of electronic commerce and payment solutions for businesses and consumers worldwide. Serving 4.1 million merchant locations, 1,400 card issuers and millions of consumers, First Data powers the global economy by making it easy, fast and secure for people and businesses around the world to buy goods and services using virtually any form of payment. The company's portfolio of services and solutions includes credit, debit, private-label, smart and stored-value card issuing and merchant transaction processing services; money transfer services; money orders; fraud protection and authentication solutions; check guarantee and verification services through TeleCheck; as well as Internet commerce and mobile solutions. The company's STAR Network offers PIN-secured debit acceptance at 1.6 million ATM and retail locations. For more information, visit www.firstdata.com.

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