

Credit reports free beginning Dec. 1

From Register news services

Starting Wednesday, you will be able to get free copies of your credit reports every year from the three major credit agencies - **Equifax**, **Experian** and **TransUnion**.

FREE CREDIT REPORT

The public's access to free copies of their reports, which track the amount of debt consumers have and whether they pay their bills on time, was mandated by the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003. The law, better known as the FACT Act, was designed to help Americans better monitor the reports that are used by banks and merchants to determine if they'll lend to a consumer, and at what interest rate.

HOW CAN I GET MY FREE REPORT?

Consumers will be able to go to a single Web site, www.annualcreditreport.com, where they can request their reports online. Or they'll be able to call a toll-free number, (877) 322-8228, or mail a request to Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281.

It will take about 15 days to process phone and mail requests.

If you use the online request site, you will be asked for personal information so the credit agencies can match them accurately with their reports. This will include name, date of birth, address and other information that only you should know.

WHAT DO I LOOK FOR WHEN I GET THE REPORT?

Accounts that aren't yours.

Any delinquencies that are still on the report after the seven-year time limit has passed.

Notices of late payments that the consumer believes were on time.

Multiple collection-agency notices for a single debt.