

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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The gift giving associated with Christmas, presents us with many opportunities to have our names put on mailing lists that could result in receiving unwanted mailings, product solicitations or worse yet, identity theft. Steps can be taken to limit the likelihood of getting our names placed on mailing lists that are later bought and sold to other organizations.

The holiday season results in gifts of tools, a variety of appliances, electronics, games, etc. that come with a warranty card. Filling out the warranty card is a good idea in order to make it easier to replace the product in case it fails prior to the end of the warranty. To register your product on a warranty card, you are only required to fill in your name, address, date of purchase and the product's serial or model number. The rest of the information collected is generally used for marketing purposes. Be aware that you can opt out of those marketing programs and from getting your name added to a mailing list that may later be sold to others.

You must take action to protect your privacy. If you do not want your bank, credit union, brokerage firm, insurance company or credit card company to sell your personal information, you can opt out. Your privacy is protected by the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act of 1999 which requires financial institutions to give you notice of three things: the kinds of information it collects about you and how the information will be used; your ability to prevent the sharing of your customer data with third parties; and its policies to prevent fraudulent access to confidential financial information. The Act requires that all customers receive privacy notices annually and they (the customer) has the right to opt out of having their personal information

sold to or shared with third party non affiliates such as retailers, direct marketers or non profit organizations.

Examples of information that can be sold include things such as name, address, social security number, assets and income. You can not prevent financial institutions from sharing information with outside organizations whose services are necessary for conducting normal business, such as outside companies that print checks.

You may want to check with your financial institution on its preferred method for customers to opt out. It might be as easy as a toll free number, a reply form with check off boxes, e-mail or a web site form. Financial institutions are not required to provide pre paid postage. For answers to frequently asked questions about privacy notices, check out the nonprofit consumer advocacy group, Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, website: www.privacyrights.org and click on financial privacy.

To learn more about protecting your privacy, contact the Grundy County Extension office at 319-824-6979 and ask for publication PM 1725a.