Target Data Breach May Have Affected 110 Million People

January 10, 2014 - Target Stores has announced that the massive data breach it reported last month was actually much larger than first thought. In its original statement, the company said the breach impacted 40 million people who made in-store purchases between November 27th and December 15th of last year. But today the company had to increase that to somewhere from 7 million to as many as 110 million people. And according to at least one report in the Chicago Tribune, the breach also included online sales; a direct contradiction of the company's prior statements.

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Target has been widely criticized for its reaction to the breach. Right after it was announced, the company setup a call-in hotline. But unless you were a user of the company's Red Card, you were simply directed to a prerecorded message directing you to contact your bank. There were also widespread reports of people being placed on hold for hours, having their calls cut off and not being able to get their questions answered. The company has been promising to provide identity theft protection services to affected consumers but that program won't be in place until next week.

Meanwhile, there are already many reports of fraud that are being attributed to the breach. To date, anyone in this position has been forced to fend for themselves or rely on help from their bank.

The data stolen varied from customer to customer but included names, addresses, account numbers, security code information and PIN numbers for debit cards. According to the company the PIN numbers were encrypted.

Based on the latest revelations from the company, anyone who made a purchase with the company (either in-store or on-line) during the dates mentioned above should contact their credit or debit card issuer and have a new card issued. Since

the breach reportedly occurred at the point of sale, anyone who wrote a check at a target store should probably also speak with their bank to make sure that there is no risk that their checking account number was stolen. The company has not mentioned this in any of its releases but given the slow pace of their announcements we believe that consumers should take extra precautions to protect themselves.
Below, you can find a video report on today's announcement.

byJim Malmberg
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