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Why Businesses Aren't Accepting Checks

You may have noticed that more and more businesses are no longer accepting personal checks. Ever wondered why businesses are not accepting personal checks anymore?



A personal check is a promissory note. It guarantees the business that the

customer has the funds to pay for the purchase, and trusts that payment will be made. There is a risk involved with handling personal checks. The reality of insufficient funds hangs over every purchase.

So the reason some businesses do not accept checks is because of a

history of excessive "bad checks" that cost their business too much money and aggravation, therefore they prefer to accept only cash and debit or credit cards.

Farmers State Bank offers an ADVANTAGE Visa debit card, which is also called a check card, that can be used in place of a personal check. The charges will be electronically deducted from your checking account. When you make purchases with your debit card, simply deduct that amount from your check register.

Debit card holders should note that if they are enrolled in our Overdraft Protection or Ready Reserve program, your available balance will

display your checking account balance, plus, your overdraft protection balance.

The banking industry believes that debit cards could eventually replace personal checks because of their ease of use. Some of the many uses include using your card at the store, for purchases online, over the phone and as an ATM card. Many vendors and payment services welcome this type of payment.

If you would be interested in a VISA debit card, ask one of the tellers at either location for an application. There is no monthly charge and you may actually be saving money because you will be writing fewer checks.

Bill Pay - Is it for me?

Our bill payment system puts you in control of your bills, your money and your time. You control when your payment is sent and how much you want to pay.

If you pay bills by check, you realize how time consuming writing out checks can be. Our electronic bill payment system can save you time. And time isn't all it will save you. When you pay bills online, you can:

- Pay your bills whenever you want, wherever you want.
 - You have the convenience of paying your bills online.
 - Receive an automatic payment history for every bill you pay.
 - Reduce your chance for late fees and minimize interest charges.
 - Schedule any bill to be paid at a specific time, automatically, online each month.
 - Receive e-mail reminders to pay any e-Bills to avoid losing them in the "Bill Stack."
- So save your stamps and envelopes, put away your checkbook and clear your desk. To start paying your bills online, please contact any of our employees at either Farmers State Bank location.



“You don't have to be a computer genius to protect yourself online.”

Five Ways to Stay Safe Online

The Internet is supposed to make our lives better, and for most of us, that's exactly what it does. But the Internet has a dark side, and unless we take the proper precautions, this wonderful tool can end up causing us more harm than good.

You don't have to be a computer genius to protect yourself online and you don't have to spend a lot of money. By following a few common sense tips, you can make the most out of your Internet experience, while protecting you and your family from online threats.

Protect your accounts.

Choosing hard-to-guess passwords and changing them regularly can help prevent criminals from getting at your money or personal information.

Make copies.

Regularly backing up your music, photos and other important files can save you if your computer crashes or is stolen.

Know your options.

If something does go wrong, there are resources available to help get you back on your feet.

Keep informed.

Subscribe to the National Cyber Alert System from the U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team at www.us-cert.gov. Through the Alert System, you can receive timely information about current cyber security problems to protect home and office computers.

Get your School involved.

Check with your children's school and see if they are teaching students and staff about cyber security education and awareness.

Redeem Matured Savings Bonds

The U.S. Treasury Department's Bureau of the Public Debt has launched an initiative to reach holders of 39 million outstanding Series E savings bonds purchased between 1941 and 1978.

Worth more than \$16 billion, the bonds stopped earning interest 30 or 40 years after their issue date. As a result, bondholders are

continually losing money because of inflation.

To educate the public and streamline the redemption effort, a dedicated Web site has been established to help Americans identify matured bonds:

www.treasuryhunt.gov

By entering the Social Security Number at the Web site, visitors can find out if they have

outstanding matured bonds that have been issued since 1974. Even if the original owner of the bond is deceased, the legal heir can still claim the money. Bonds issued prior to 1974 can also be located by following the instructions on the site.



E-Statements or Combine Your Statements

Are your check image binders filling up? Did you know you can combine all of your different accounts' statements into one and reduce the number of statements that you receive? Did you know you could receive your statements AND images via your Internet Banking account?

Internet Banking customers can sign up to have their statements AND images sent

to their Internet Banking account. There are some significant advantages in receiving your statements electronically, such as, Same Day Delivery, Easy Storage, World Wide Access, Access to Prior Statements, and you will be Environmentally Friendly. Also, electronic copies of your bank accounts significantly decreases the chance for Identity Theft from dumpster diving.

Your checking account and savings account can be printed on the same statement, thus reducing the amount of paper in your binder. You can do the same thing with two different checking (or savings) accounts.

If you would like to try either of these options for your statements, inform any one of the tellers.



“The PRM analyst will only ask for your name and will not ask you to provide any personal information.”

Fraud Monitoring System for Debit Cards

As debit card usage continues to grow, the industry is being hit with more and more fraudulent activity. Farmers State Bank has added a fraud detection program for our debit and ATM card customers, called Proactive Risk Management (PRM).

PRM monitors every debit card and ATM card transaction. PRM will help minimize fraud by calculating a score based on previous confirmed fraud authorizations. Each one of your transactions will be assigned a score.

PRM monitors transactions in near real-time, within minutes of the transaction being authorized. PRM fraud

analysts monitor transactions 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, including holidays.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If a PRM fraud analyst believes suspicious activity is taking place with your card, they will contact you by phone. This is why it is important for you to keep your phone records up to date with Farmers State Bank. If you have a cell phone, please make sure we have that number on record.

If you are called by one of our PRM analysts, you will be asked to call them at 1-800-830-1925 as soon as possible. The PRM analyst will state that they are calling

on behalf of Farmers State Bank. The PRM analyst will only ask for your name and will not ask you to provide any other information.

The PRM analyst will ask you about the suspicious transaction(s). If the transaction is legitimate you can continue to use your card. If you did not make the transaction, the PRM analyst will stop any further transactions on your card and ask that you contact Farmers State Bank as soon as possible.

Once again, the PRM analyst will not ask you to divulge any personal information. If you have any questions about this new security feature please let us know.





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Go With the Bank That Leads the Way!

Teller Tidbits

Would you like to receive your copy of *Money Matters* via email? Contact us at fsb@fsbparkston.com.

If you are sending in checks by mail, please DO NOT staple them to the deposit slips or other papers sent.

In 2009, the United States Mint will mint and issue four different one-cent coins in recognition of the bicentennial of President Abraham Lincoln's birth and the 100th anniversary of the first issuance of the Lincoln cent. While the obverse (heads) will continue to bear the familiar likeness of President

Lincoln currently on the one-cent coin, the reverse will reflect four different designs, each one representing a different aspect, or theme, of the life of President Lincoln.



RMDs Suspended for 2009

Traditional IRA holders age 70½ or older will not have to take a required minimum distribution (RMD) from their tax-deferred retirement accounts in 2009, thanks to a new federal law. The measure is intended to help retirees conserve their resources after last year's sharp stock market downturn.

Normally, investors over age 70½ are required to take an annual withdrawal. Lawmakers who voted for the measure suspending RMDs in 2009 said it was unfair to require retirees to withdraw money from retirement accounts already reduced in value by the stock market selloff. This would presumably leave more money in investors' retirement accounts, where it would have the potential to continue growing tax-free until withdrawal.

The 2009 RMD suspension applies to IRAs, 401(k)s, 403(b)s, and other defined contribution plans. The suspension also applies to investors under age 70½ with inherited IRAs or inherited retirement plan accounts that would otherwise be subject to RMDs.