

## DIRECT EXPRESS<sup>®</sup> PREPAID DEBIT CARD FOR SOCIAL SECURITY, SSI AND OTHER FEDERAL PAYMENTS

Beginning May 1, 2011, most new applicants for Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and other federal payments who do not designate direct deposit will be paid through the Direct Express<sup>®</sup> Debit MasterCard instead of by a paper check. And as of March 1, 2013 *current* recipients (with limited exceptions) must also choose an electronic option for payments.

**Is the Direct Express<sup>®</sup> Card better than a paper check?** For those without bank accounts, the Direct Express<sup>®</sup> card has important benefits:

- **No check cashing fees.** Get cash free or for a small fee.
- **Receive money faster.** Funds will be available the day they are paid, without waiting for a check to arrive in the mail.
- **Convenience.** The card can be used anywhere a MasterCard debit card is accepted, including for telephone and online payments. Get cash from any bank, ATM or merchant who provides cash back.
- **Safety.** You don't need to "cash" the entire payment at once, and funds stored on the card are safer than cash. You are protected from theft if you report the theft promptly.
- **Record keeping.** Statements are available detailing your purchases.

However, you must protect your card by safeguarding the personal identification number (PIN), by reviewing your statements regularly, and by being aware of the fees for some services.

### QUICK TIPS

- **Sign up for regular monthly statements.** It is worth \$0.75 cents/month to protect the card from unauthorized charges and to have a complete record of transactions.
- **Free cash.** One cash withdrawal is free per deposit at ATMs in the Direct Express<sup>®</sup> network. Withdrawals are also free inside at the teller window at any MasterCard member bank (most banks) or by asking for cash back from a purchase.
- **Sign up for free deposit and low balance alerts** by telephone, email or text message.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**How do I know how much money is on the card?** You can call customer service or check the balance online or at an ATM for free. You can also sign up for free text, telephone or email messages to alert you when a deposit is made or your balance slips below an amount you pick.

**Will I get a statement?** You can view the last 90 days of activity online. You can sign up for a regular paper monthly statement for \$0.75/month or get one for free from time to time by calling customer service.

**Is the money on the card safe?** The funds are FDIC-insured. If the card or password is lost or stolen, you can get a replacement card or change the password. If someone makes an unauthorized charge, you are liable for no more than \$50 if you report the loss or theft within two business days of learning about it.

**Can I get the Direct Express® Card if I have a bank account?** Yes. Direct deposit into a bank account is better for those who want paper checks or use their account regularly, but the Direct Express® card may be better for people concerned about overdraft or other bank fees.

**Is the Direct Express® Card better than the prepaid cards I can get from a check casher or another store?** Yes. The fees on the Direct Express® card are generally much lower than the fees on other prepaid cards and the card comes with strong consumer protections. The Direct Express® card is not sold in private stores.

**What if I still want a paper check?** Paper checks are no longer an option except for a few people, including those 90 years or older or those who can document a disability. Check with the federal agency that makes your payment.

## WHAT ABOUT FEES?

There is no sign-up or regular monthly fee for the card and minimal user fees.

Fee	Purpose
\$ 0.90	ATM withdrawals after the first free one per deposit, plus any surcharge from a non-network ATM
\$ 0.75	Automatic monthly paper statement
\$ 1.50	Automated telephone (IVR) transfers to another account
\$ 4.00	Replacement card after the first one each year
\$13.50	Expedited delivery of a replacement card
\$ 3.00	International ATM withdrawals
3%	Purchases or withdrawals in an international currency

## Learn More

[U.S. Treasury Department's Direct Express Information](#)

[Direct Express Enrollment](#) (includes list of surcharge-free ATM locations) or call toll-free (888) 544-6347