

## Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

### News You Can Use: Breathe Easier Thanks to the Red Flags Rule Delay

You'll have more time to get your optometry practice in shape.

If you're still trying to figure out whether the government's new Red Flags Rule applies to your optometry practice, you're in luck. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) delayed the May 1 compliance deadline. But that doesn't mean you can put identity theft policies on the back burner -- here's what you need to know.

Be Ready By August 1

Just one day before the original compliance deadline (see "Think Red Flags Rule Doesn't Affect You? Think Again," in Optometry Coding & Billing Alert, Vol. 7, No. 4), the FTC, which oversees the government's implementation of the Red Flags Rule, announced that you'll have until Aug. 1 to get your practice ready.

More good news: The FTC also noted in the delay announcement that "for entities that have a low risk of identity theft, such as businesses that know their customers personally, the Commission will soon release a template to help them comply with the law."

Reason for the delay: Many medical practices were unclear about how, and if, the rule affected them at all.

Plus, when practices did realize they needed to comply with the new rule, they weren't sure how to implement a policy. The three-month extension allows practices extra time to get their programs together.

"From my experience there was not enough effort in many industries, not just healthcare, to get the word out that companies were required to comply," explains **Ester Horowitz, MBA**, owner/certified management counselor and practice marketing advisor with M2Power Inc. in Merrick, N.Y.

For more information, visit [www.ftc.gov/opa/2009/04/redflagsrule.shtm](http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2009/04/redflagsrule.shtm).