Bankcard: New Electronic Chip Cards Shift More Liability To Retailer
By Mac Hardin, Northwestern Lumber Association Bankcard Program

A major change is coming in bankcard processing that will affect your business. Over the next year and a half, Visa, MasterCard, Discover, and American Express will be issuing credit and debit cards that contain an electronic chip.

This is being done as the “bad guys” of the world increasingly find ways to change data on the card’s magnetic strip. It is entirely possible that a card with an altered magnetic has been presented in your store. Chances are you, as a retailer, never knew it was fraudulent, processed the transaction, and were paid for by your credit card processor just like normal.

To cut down on fraud due to an altered magnetic strip, card companies will soon begin issuing credit and debit cards with an electronic chip on the front, while also maintaining the traditional magnetic strip on the back. With this change, there will also be a shift in the liability of swiped credit card transactions which turn out to be fraudulent.

If, by October 1, 2015, your store has not invested in upgraded terminals or other equipment capable of reading electronic chips, and instead you continue to swipe and read each card’s magnetic strip, the liability for any fraudulent sales will shift to you, the retailer. The card companies will no longer absorb it.

So, while you will still be able to process cards with your present terminal and equipment even after October 1st of next year, you will be doing so at the risk of accepting a card with an altered magnetic strip. When this happens, you will be on the hook for the cost of any fraudulent transactions. The only way to avoid this risk will be to invest in equipment capable of reading electronic chips.

If you use NLA as your bankcard processor, we already have chip-reading terminals available. These terminals can read both a chip, and a magnetic stripe, so you will have no problem with cards presented in your store that don’t yet have a chip. If you’re processing directly through a point-of-sale system, card chip reading equipment would come from your POS supplier.

For additional information on processing the new electronic chip cards, or if you would like to find out if NLA’s bankcard service can save you money, please contact Mac Hardin at 800-999-4399, or by email, mach@retailfinancialservices.biz. Mac is available to assist all NLA members with all of their bankcard processing questions and needs.