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## UAE banks hit by surge in ATM fraud

**Banks across the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are sending customers text messages urging them to change their PIN numbers following a surge in fraudulent ATM withdrawals made abroad.**

Citi, Lloyds TSB, HSBC, Dubai Bank, National Bank of Abu Dhabi (NBAD) and Emirates NBD are among the banks to have contacted customers via SMS to tell them to visit ATMs and change their PIN numbers.

According to local press reports hundreds of thousands of customers have been queuing at cash machines over the last couple of days to change their PINs following a jump in fraudulent transactions made from ATMs in other countries.

The affected banks, along with MasterCard and Visa, are investigating the security breach but details of how criminals obtained the PIN numbers remain sketchy. Local press reports suggest data was stolen after a breach of the network that allows banks to share customer debit card information.

In a statement on its Web site, HSBC says the move is in response to "an attack on our local accounts from counterfeit ATM card usage abroad".

Lloyds TSB says: "Whilst only a relatively small number of our customers have been affected by fraudulent activity, the rise in instances of card related fraud across the UAE is a concern, and we urge our customers to take precautions."

Lloyds TSB, Dubai Bank and NBAD have all moved to block overseas transactions on cards and say they will refund any customers hit by fraudsters.

Saif Al Shehhi, senior general manager, domestic banking, NBAD, says the bank has moved to block certain transactions from overseas locations which may have caused some temporary inconvenience to customers travelling.

He says no customers will be out of pocket as a result of the incident.



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Bloomberg is reporting that 42% of Dubai Bank customers have been affected by the fraud.

Both Dubai Bank and NBAD have temporarily blocked international use of ATM cards in order to prevent further fraud.