

Identity Theft Tips

Identity theft is the fastest growing crime in the United States!

A Federal Trade Commission (FTC) study reported that nearly 10 million people were victims of identity theft in 2003.

Don't become a victim!

i-SAFE Inc. has created a list of helpful tips and reminders that can be used to help recognize potentially hazardous situations and to teach you how to respond appropriately.

- **Monitor your credit card situation regularly.**

Obtain your credit report at least once a year from at least one of the three major credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion), and look carefully for any unusual or fraudulent activity.

- **Beware of all requests for your personal information online.**

Legitimate companies will not send unsolicited requests for personal information (addresses, account numbers, passwords, social security numbers). A good rule of thumb is to never give out this type of personal information unless you have a trusted business relationship with the requestor and you initiate the correspondence.

- **Do not respond to unsolicited e-mails, links within e-mails, or pop-up ads.**

Fraudsters often use spam, spyware, and adware to acquire information from potential victims.

- **Never reveal personal information in e-mails, on instant messages, in profiles, on bulletin boards, or in chat rooms.**

Con artists often intercept personal information sent electronically over the Internet to steal their victim's identity.

- **Use a firewall to further protect your computer from intrusions.**

Firewalls offer an extra layer of protection against hackers trying to gain access to your computer and the information stored within.

- **Shred all documents that you plan to throw away.**

These documents include bank statements, preapproved credit card offers, utility bills, and any other documentation with your social security or account numbers.

- **Protect and store personal information at home.**

Ensure that files and documents are safely stored and inaccessible to visitors to your home (i.e. repair persons, casual acquaintances, etc.).

- **Don't carry your social security card (unless absolutely necessary).**

Any item containing your social security number can be an inviting target to identity thieves.

- **Take your outgoing mail to your local post office.**

Send bills, checks, or other personal correspondence from a secure location. Residential mailboxes without locks are open targets to identity thieves.

- **Install a locking mailbox at your residence.**

Criminals often obtain the information they need by intercepting mail in unlocked street mailboxes.

- **Notify law enforcement if you see someone "dumpster diving."**

People rummaging through garbage may be looking for unshredded documents that contain valuable personal information.

- **Beware of "shoulder surfers."**

These people look over your shoulder as you fill out forms or provide passwords and secret codes. Hide from others any papers, receipts, notes, or any other documents with passwords, personal identification (PIN) numbers, social security numbers, account numbers, and other personal information.

- **Place a fraud alert on your credit.**

This is a first line of defense if you have lost your wallet, purse, social security card, passport, or if you suspect you may be a victim of identity theft. Contact each of the three credit bureaus for assistance.