

ABOUT IDENTITY THEFT:

In the United States, there are approximately 10 million victims of identity theft each year. Identity theft can ruin your credit and your reputation.

- According to the Federal Trade Commission, it can take between 200 and 600 hours, plus \$1,500, for a victim of identity theft to restore his or her identity.
- In the U.S., identity theft represents annual fraud costs of \$53 billion.
- Identity thieves often rely on wallets, mail, receipts from retailers and medical files to steal personal information. During tax season, it is particularly important to destroy records securely and keep them out of identity thieves' hands.
- The Javelin Strategy and Research Identity Fraud Survey Report suggests that most thieves still obtain personal information through traditional rather than electronic channels.

PREVENTING IDENTITY THEFT:

Identity thieves thrive on documents consumers have thrown in the garbage. Securely destroying information prevents it from falling into the wrong hands.

- In addition to shredding sensitive materials, tips to prevent identity theft include:
 - Be careful when giving personal information, especially by telephone or online.
 - Use a locked mailbox, and have mail held for your return if you are traveling.
 - Make sure outgoing mail is secure.
 - Keep your personal documents in a locked box, drawer or personal safe.
 - Carry a minimal amount of personal information in your wallet – it is unlikely you use your passport or social insurance card regularly.
 - Take receipts with you when leaving stores and restaurants.
 - Destroy envelopes and return address labels.
 - Close any unused financial accounts.
 - Ask periodically for a copy of your credit report.

According to the Department of Justice, an average of 34,000 property crimes- including the theft of confidential materials – occur each day in offices nationwide.

- Tips to protect yourself at work include:
 - Shred old files, documents, receipts, business cards, letterhead, business forms, contact lists, financial reports, customer data and proprietary information.
 - Store personnel files securely.
 - Develop a comprehensive document management system.
 - Make sure you understand your company's destruction and privacy policies.

IF YOU BECOME A VICTIM:

- Place a fraud alert on your credit reports, and review your credit reports.
- Close the accounts that you believe have been tampered with or opened fraudulently.
- File a report with your local police or in the community where the identity theft took place.
- File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission.

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