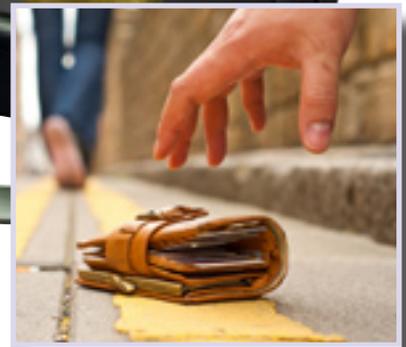


“Other” Types Of Identity Theft



According to the Federal Trade Commission, the most common types of identity theft are credit card fraud, utility fraud, bank and loan fraud, employment-related fraud, and government document or benefit fraud. While many people are aware of credit card fraud as it is the number one crime committed and is also the easiest way a criminal can use your information, it is important to understand the other types of identity theft in order to protect yourself. It is the goal of this article to discuss four other types of identity theft and some ways to protect you from each. While nobody is completely safe from identity theft, there are steps you can take to reduce the chance of becoming a victim.

Utility Fraud

Identity theft can extend to utility fraud which is currently rated the number two type of fraud in the United States and is actually higher than credit card fraud in certain states. Utility fraud is relatively easy to commit and is the practice of an identity thief using your personal information to obtain utility accounts such as gas, electric, water and sewer, cable, and other services. The thief can also setup telecommunication accounts such as a home or cell phone and in many cases a thief needs only your name, address and phone number to commit utility fraud. About 15 percent of senior victims report that an identity thief obtained unauthorized telecommunications or utility equipment or services in their name.

Loan Fraud

Bank and loan fraud is another identity theft crime that often affects the elderly as about 10% of all victims over age 60 reported fraud involving their checking or saving accounts and 7% reported that an identity thief obtained a loan in their name. Bank fraud is sometimes perpetrated from the inside by a bank employee or manager who already has access to financial information and will sell it to the highest bidder. There are also thieves who already have some of your information and will disguise themselves as a bank official to try and get banking account numbers. Never give any information over the phone to somebody that claims that they work for a financial institution. Instead, ask for an appointment where you can meet with them in person at the bank. It is also important that you never click on an e-mail link in a message said to be from a financial institution



asking for information to verify your account. A legitimate bank will never use this type of communication.



Employment Fraud

Employment fraud comes in two styles with the first type being where someone steals your social security number to get employment. With the ever increasing influx of illegal immigrants looking for work in the United States, the chance of somebody using your social security number to find gainful employment is on the rise. In fact, about 2% of victims over the age of 60 reported that an identity thief used their personal information for employment purposes. While you can reduce the possibility of this crime by keeping tight control of who has access to your social security number, there are no guarantees as many of these illegal immigrants will pick a social security number at random. While most people utilizing this method are simply people looking for work and not true identity thieves, the method is still illegal and can cause negative effects for the victim.

The second type of employment fraud should be particularly concerning to most Americans as this is the practice of a thief obtaining employment in small businesses such as doctor offices, dentists, and banks to gain access to patient or customer records. Because it is the responsibility of a business to keep their records safe, there is very little an individual can do about this type of crime other than choose only well-known and reputable businesses with a strong privacy policy.

Government Fraud

Government fraud can occur in many ways including tactics such as applying for government benefits, unemployment insurance, financial aid, or even filing for bankruptcy while using somebody else's social security number. Some identity thieves will commit traffic violations or other crimes and then give a victim's personal information when caught as it can be easy to get falsified drivers licenses, state IDs, bank cards, and social security numbers.

As you can see, identity thieves are not limited to credit card fraud but can practice other techniques such as the four listed above. Even though credit card fraud, utility fraud, bank and loan fraud, employment-related fraud, and government document fraud are the top 5 methods that identity theft criminals utilize, it would be foolish to think that they are the only methods available. The methods that an enterprising thief may employ is limited only by his imagination. Because identity theft has become so common it is impossible to be completely safe but you can take steps to reduce the risk. **TQR**



Thieves are just waiting to pounce.

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