

# IDENTITY THEFT

**Protect Your Identity / Protect Yourself**

**Cook County Sheriff • Michael F. Sheahan**



## BE AWARE

Identity theft is a serious crime that occurs when someone uses personal information such as your name, social security number, passport, bank account, and other data without your knowledge to commit fraud or theft. Thieves acquire your personal information by:

- Stealing Social Security numbers, banking, checking, and credit card numbers.
- Stealing incoming/outgoing mail that includes account statements, pre-approved credit card offers, and tax information.
- Digging through your garbage —“Dumpster Driving”
- Buying your information from employees at stores, hotels, and restaurants.
- Retrieving your personal information off the Internet.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE A VICTIM

- Contact your bank, creditors, and financial institutions to close accounts first by phone then by certified mail. Put passwords (not your mother's maiden name) on any new accounts you open.
- Notify the major credit reporting bureaus. Ask that a “fraud alert” be placed on your file and no new credit granted without your approval.

## PROTECT YOURSELF

- Do not give out your Social Security number unless absolutely necessary. Never print your Social Security number on your checks.
- Check your credit cards, bank statements, and utility bills for any unauthorized activity.
- List or photocopy the contents of your wallet. Only carry the identification and credit cards that you need, keep everything else in a safe place.
- Pick up your mail as soon as possible. Always send mail from a secure mailbox or a local post office.
- Request a copy of your credit report once a year. Investigate any suspicious accounts or activity.
- Shred or cut up important information before discarding.

- Report the identity theft to your local police department and request a copy of the report.
- Keep copies of all documents. Always send photocopies never originals.
- Request copies of your credit report every six months until your credit is clear.

# RESOURCES

## **Major Credit**

### **Reporting Agencies:**

Equifax: 800-525-6285  
Transunion: 800-680-7289  
Experian: 888-397-3742

## **Major Check**

### **Verification Companies:**

Chexsystems: 800-428-9623  
Scan: 800-262-7771  
Checkrite: 800-766-2748

### **Federal Trade Commission (FTC):**

[www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) 877-438-4338

### **United States Department of Justice:**

[www.usdoj.gov/criminal/fraud/idtheft.html](http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/fraud/idtheft.html)

### **Illinois Attorney General: Consumer Protection Division:**

[www.ag.state.il.us/consumer.idtheft.htm](http://www.ag.state.il.us/consumer.idtheft.htm) 800-386-5438

### **Social Security Administration (Fraud Hotline):**

800-269-0271

### **Cook County States Attorney: Consumer Fraud Division:**

312-603-8700



Cook County Sheriff  
Michael F. Sheahan

**“Millions of Americans every year become victims of identity theft. Protect your identity, protect yourself.”**

**– Michael F. Sheahan**

Call for further information:

Cook County Sheriff  
Department of Community Services  
708-974-6799  
[www.cookcountysheriff.org](http://www.cookcountysheriff.org)