



P.O. Box 7857
Madison, WI 53707-7857
www.doj.state.wi.us

J.B. VAN HOLLEN
ATTORNEY GENERAL

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
January 24, 2010

For More Information Contact:
Bill Cosh 608/266-1221

PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM IDENTITY THEFT

Identity theft continues to negatively impact many of our citizens. Chances are you or someone you know may have experienced some form of identity theft. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), as many as 9 million Americans have their identities stolen each year. Statistics released by the FTC for complaints per 100,000 population, revealed that Wisconsin ranked 41st in the nation with 2,450 victims in 2007.

Some Wisconsin residents have experienced a very sophisticated phone scam. It began with a phone call and an automated message indicating that your debit card has been deactivated because of questionable charges. Then, the recording asked folks to 'Please enter your 15-digit card number,' tricking people into giving up important credit card and financial information.

In this case, the scam was further complicated through the use of hijacking a legitimate business's phone number that was portrayed on caller I.D.

No one is immune from becoming the victim of identity theft. With stolen identities, identity thieves commit credit card fraud, telephone or utility fraud, employment fraud, Internet fraud, bank fraud and evade traffic citations or arrest. If you take the following steps you can lessen your chances of becoming an identity theft victim:

- Manage your personal information wisely; make sure you know why your personal information is required and how it will be used.
- Shred discarded personal records and documents.
- Don't give out personal information on the telephone, mail or Internet unless you are sure whom you are speaking with.
- Pay attention to billing cycles.
- Guard your mail from theft.

- Do not carry your Social Security card, extra credit cards, birth certificate or passport, except when necessary.
- Order copies of your credit report yearly.
- Keep personal information in a safe place.

If you become the unfortunate victim of identity theft you need to take the following steps immediately to best insure protection:

- Contact your local law enforcement agency and report the crime.
- Contact the fraud department from each of the three credit bureaus:
Experian, 888-397-3742, www.experian.com
Equifax, 800-525-6285, www.equifax.com
Trans Union, 800-680-7289, www.transunion.com
- Document and keep records of all correspondence.
- Contact creditors for any fraudulent accounts opened or tampered.
- Contact the Federal Trade Commission (1-877-ID-THEFT).

As with most crimes, awareness is an effective weapon against many forms of identity theft. Protect your personal identifying information with the same security as you do with your personal property. Be aware of how personal identifying information is stolen and what you can do to protect yours. Armed with the knowledge of how to protect yourself, you can make an identity thief's job much more difficult.

###