

## U.S. Postal Inspection Service

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service is the federal law enforcement branch of the U.S. Postal Service. It's primary jurisdiction covers all matters that infringe on the integrity of the U.S. Mail.

Since most identity theft involves the U.S. Mail, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service has become a lead agency in investigating incidents of identity theft.

If you or someone you know is a victim of identity theft that involves the U.S. Mail, report it to the Boston Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service which is located at:

**495 Summer Street, Suite 600  
Boston, MA 02210-2214  
617-556-4400**

### Request a copy of your credit report

In Massachusetts, you are entitled to one free copy of your credit report each year. You can request your free copy by contacting one of these three Credit Reporting Companies:

**Equifax- 1-800-685-1111**

**Experian- 1-888-397-3742**



Proud supporter of  
the Plymouth County TRIAD initiative



## Identity Theft

### The Senior Protection Unit

The Plymouth County  
District Attorney's Office

166 Main Street  
Brockton, MA 02301

508-584-8120

[www.plymouthda.com](http://www.plymouthda.com)



**TIMOTHY J. CRUZ**  
Plymouth County District Attorney

The Plymouth County  
District Attorney's Office



## Identity Theft



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## A Message from the District Attorney:



The Federal Trade Commission estimates that approximately nine million people report having their identity stolen each year.

Identity theft is a crime that is fast-paced and frustrating. Victims are unaware that their identity has been stolen until it is too late.

The typical way a victim finds out that their identity has been stolen is when their credit card is denied for no apparent reason. In a short period of time they discover that the identity thief has immersed them into a considerable amount of debt.

In an effort to raise the public's awareness to this crime, I have developed this brochure. I ask you to be extremely careful, cautious and extra-vigilant when it comes to using your credit cards and giving out your personal information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy J. Cruz".

Timothy J. Cruz  
District Attorney

## Personal Safety Tips

### Buy a Shredder, and Shred, Shred, Shred

Identity thieves will go through garbage to obtain personal information about you. Be sure to shred old bank statements, credit statements, credit card offers as well as junk-mail.

### Guard personal information

Your SSN is the key to your credit. Never print your SSN on your checks. In Massachusetts, you can request a license identification number to replace your SSN on your license. You can use your license number when writing or cashing checks.

Never give your credit-card number or personal info out to anyone over the phone unless you have initiated the call and trust that business. This includes requests for your mother's maiden name.

### Slim down your wallet

Do not keep SSN cards, extra credit cards or other important identification documents in your wallet or purse, except when they are needed. If a thief obtains these, he has ready access to all of your accounts.

### Make a copy of the contents of your wallet

Copy both sides of everything contained in your wallet. In the event that your purse or wallet is stolen, you will be able to provide accurate account numbers to the proper authority.

## How an Identity Thief Operates

- Identity thieves use several methods to obtain personal information about their victims.
- They search mailboxes, trash, and landfills looking for: bank statements, utility bills, credit card statements, tax information, new checks, pre-approved credit card offers and convenience checks for credit cards.
- They call potential victims on the phone, and pose as legitimate businessman to obtain personal information.
- Once they have obtained enough of the victim's identity, they will file a "change of address" form to divert a newly applied for credit card in the victim's name to a different location, such as a P.O. Box that the victim has zero access to.
- They can obtain a cell phone in the victim's name, and never pay the bill.
- They can open a bank account, and take out a loan in the victim's name. The thief can take the money and default on the loan.



**Identity Theft**