

Identity Theft Over The Internet

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Having someone steal your identity seem to be the stuff that science fiction books and movies have on their convoluted plots. But that was before... before the rise of technological advancement, before the creation of the world wide web.

Now, identity theft is no longer a dream for some hackers and internet con artists. One can even say that with their techniques and expertise, it will be like taking candy from a baby... yet this time, it involves more than sweets. Life is at stake, personal and social life.

How can someone steal your identity? By assuming your name, Social Security number, credit card number, or some other piece of your personal information for their own use. In short, identity theft occurs when someone uses your personal information without your knowledge to commit fraud or theft.

They open a new credit card account, using your name, date of birth, and Social Security number. When they use the credit card and don't pay the bills, the delinquent account is reported on your credit report. They call your credit card issuer and, pretending to be you, change the mailing address on your credit card account.

Then, your imposter incur charges on your account in your name and have the bills sent to the new address. This is why most people may not immediately realize that their is a problem. They establish cellular phone service in your name. They open a bank account in your name and write bad checks on that account.

How Easy is it to Get Personal Information?

The amount of information available on the Internet about you and those you know is almost unbelievable. Various companies offer services that provide address, criminal, civil, and professional history as well as a list of assets and bank account numbers. Also available are the Social Security number, last six addresses, current phone number as well as names and phone numbers of neighbors. Some large, prestigious companies offering such information include Lexis-Nexis and West Publishing Company.

Many smaller companies also provide similar services. This research used to take days. Today, this information is available in minutes with only a few click of your mouse. Here are economical products that can help uncover personal details you thought were strictly private.

Identity theft involves someone using key pieces of your identifying information in order to impersonate you. The usual purpose is to acquire goods or services in your name through the use of credit or debit cards. The U.S. Postal Service calls it the "one of the fastest growing robbery crimes in America."

By one industry estimate, more than 1,000 people a day in the United States fall victim to crimes of stolen identity. In 1997 the U.S. Secret Service make 9,455 arrests involving identify fraud. According to the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse there are over 400,000 thefts of identity each year with that result in more than \$2 Billion worth of annual losses for the country. Identity theft is expanding at a rate of 50% per year. Chet Holcomb of Identity Theft Assist researches and supplies information to help peoples protect their valuable credentials from identity theft.