

## **Crime Prevention**

There are many ways you can prevent yourself from becoming a victim of crime.

Keep your car doors locked at all times. Don't leave valuables in plain sight, lock them in the trunk.

- Always park in well lit, populated areas.
- Always remove, or store out of sight, all valuables left in your car.
- Install smooth, narrow locking buttons on your door locks to make forcing your locks more difficult.
- Keep your home windows and doors locked at all times.
- Tell your neighbors when you are going to be gone so they can watch your home.
- Make sure your home is well lit at night; consider using motion activated lights.
- If you are going to be gone, ask a neighbor to pick up your mail and newspaper, or have delivery stopped until your return.
- Use quality locks in doors and windows.
- Keep a cordless phone or cell phone near your bed.
- Encourage your neighbors to form a Community Block Watch Group.
- At night, only walk in well-lit and populated areas. Try to always have at least one other person with you.
- Watch for and report suspicious activities in your neighborhood, i.e., an unfamiliar person looking into parked cars as they walk through the neighborhood.

## **IDENTITY THEFT**

While no one can totally prevent the crime of identity theft from happening to you, there are some positive steps to take which will decrease your risk.

### **What is the Law in Washington State?**

RCW 9.35.020 - Identity theft

### **How do thieves get my information?**

- They go through your trashcan, looking for straight cut or un-shredded papers.
- They steal your mail or your wallet.
- They listen in on conversations you have in public.
- They trick you into giving them the information over the telephone or by email.

- They buy the information either on the Internet or from someone who might have stolen it.
- They steal it from a loan or credit application form you filled out or from files at a hospital, bank, school, or business that you deal with. They may have obtained it from dumpsters outside of such companies.
- They get it from your computer, especially those without firewalls.
- They may be a friend, relative, or someone who works for you who has access to your information.

### **How can I prevent becoming an identity theft victim?**

While no one can totally prevent this crime from occurring, here are some positive steps to take which will decrease your risk.

- Check your credit reports once a year from all three of the credit reporting agencies listed below.
- Guard your Social Security number. When possible, don't carry your Social Security card with you. Don't put your SSN or driver's license number on your checks.
- Guard your personal information. You should never give your Social Security number to anyone unless they have a good reason for needing it. Watch for people who may try to eavesdrop and overhear the information you give out orally.
- Carefully destroy papers you throw out, especially those with sensitive or identifying information. A crosscut paper shredder works best.
- Be suspicious of telephone solicitors. Never provide information unless you have initiated the call.
- Use a locked mailbox to send and receive all mail.
- Reduce the number of preapproved credit card offers you receive - 888-5OPT OUT (they will ask for your SSN)

### **What should I do if I become an identity theft victim?**

- Call the three credit reporting agencies listed below. Place a fraud alert on your Social Security number and have them send you copies of your reports. Look them over carefully for any fraudulent activity or inaccuracies.
- Call the police where you live. They must take a report and give you a copy.
- Call and write to all the creditors who have opened fraudulent accounts. Tell them this is a case of identity theft.

### **Credit Reporting Agency contact information**

- TransUnion: 800-888-4213, [www.tuc.com](http://www.tuc.com) Fraud Division: 800-680-7289 / TDD 877-553-7803
- Experian: 888-EXPERIAN, [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com) Fraud Division: 888-397-3742 / TDD 800-972-0322
- Equifax: 800-685-1111, [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com) Fraud Divisions: 800-525-6285. Hearing impaired - use AT&T line