

# Identity Theft

Identity theft is a serious, fast-growing crime. An identity thief is someone who steals your checks, Social Security number, or other personal identification, then uses your information to commit fraud or other crimes.



**For emergencies,  
call 9-1-1**

## Common Ways ID Thieves Get Your Personal Information

- They steal mail, wallets and purses. They also steal personnel records from their employers, or bribe employees who have access.
- They rummage through trash looking for bills or other paper with your personal information on it.
- They steal credit and debit card numbers by using a special “skimming” device when processing your card.
- They pretend to be financial institutions or companies and send spam or pop-up messages to get you to reveal your personal information.
- They divert your billing statements to another location by completing a “change of address” form.

## How to Avoid Becoming A Victim

- Guard your mail from theft. Use a locking mailbox, if possible. Don't leave outgoing mail in your mailbox.
- Be careful about what you toss into the trash. Shred financial documents and paperwork with personal information before discarding. This includes bank checks and statements, copies of credit applications, insurance forms, physician statements, expired credit cards.
- Protect your Social Security number. Don't carry your Social Security card in your wallet or write your Social Security number on a check. Give the number out only when absolutely necessary.
- Don't give out personal information on the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet unless you know who you are dealing with.
- Don't use obvious passwords like your birth date, mother's maiden name, or the last four digits of your Social Security number.
- Keep your personal information in a secure place at home, especially if you have roommates, employ outside help, or are having work done in your house.
- Stay alert to suspicious activity by routinely monitoring your financial accounts and billing statements.
- Request your free annual credit report. Order your free credit report by calling toll-free 1-877-322-8228 or visiting [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com).

### Remember this . . .

- Guard your mail.
- Shred documents with personal information.
- Request your free annual credit report.



**Snohomish County Sheriff's Office | Neighborhood Watch/Crime Prevention**  
**[neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org](mailto:neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org) | 425-388-7375 | <http://sheriff.snoco.org>**