



Preventing Identity Theft through Mail Theft

Tips for preventing the fraudulent use of personal information

Burnaby, BC ~ January 17, 2007 ~ In response to the recent Coquitlam credit card fraud raid, the BC Crime Prevention Association (BCCPA) would like to remind members of public of the measures they can take to prevent themselves from being a victim of both mail theft and identity theft.

According to Jeff Burton, BCCPA Crime Shield Coordinator, "Mail theft can lead to considerable financial loss and inconvenience. One of the simplest ways to prevent identity theft through mail theft is by not letting your mail accumulate in your mailbox."

Burton explains there are a number of ways of reducing your risk of identity theft through mail theft, including:

- Financial institutions and many billers including utility companies, credit card issuers and major businesses offer online services for paperless electronic billing and other online transactions, such as direct deposit or direct deposit from your account.
- Find an alternative way of receiving your financial information, whether this is picking up your bank statements directly at your bank branch or via electronic means.
- Pay attention to the delivery cycles of mail you receive on a regular basis. If your credit card, utility bills, financial statements or cheques fail to arrive, contact these companies directly to enquire whether these bills or documents have been sent out.
- If your mail appears tampered with upon receipt, bring this to the attention of the authorities in your community.
- Pick-up your mail as soon as possible after it has been delivered. If you are planning to be away for a period of time, make arrangements for someone to pick-up your mail for you or request a *Hold Mail* service from Canada Post.
- You can have your name removed from various *addressed-ad mail lists* by removing your name from the mailing list of members of the Canadian Marketing Association by visiting www.the-cma.org.
- Check your credit report regularly to ensure your personal information is not being fraudulently used for unauthorized credit applications or changes in your personal information.
- Credit card holders who have internet access are encouraged to regularly check their accounts online for recent transactions since early discovery of unauthorized purchases and alerting the credit card issuer are key steps to limiting the extent of the fraud in their name.
- Victims of this fraud are encouraged to refer to the BCCPA handout *Identity Theft Consumer Guide* for tips on reducing the risk of victimization www.bccpa.org/crimeshield/IdentityTheft/pdf/ID%20Theft%20%20Fraud%20Consumer%20Guide%20July%202006_2.pdf as well as the companion handout *Identity Theft Victims Toolkit* obtainable by sending an e-mail to info@bccpa.org

"Awareness is the best prevention against crime," states BCCPA Executive Director, Valerie MacLean. "Simple steps can be taken to significantly reduce the likelihood of being victimized."

The BC Crime Prevention Association (BCCPA) is an integrated team of team of citizens and police, dedicated to preventing crime. BCCPA promotes active community participation in crime prevention initiatives through awareness and education.

- 30 -

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