

Protect your personal information from theft

Do you pay attention to what you are throwing away? If not, you should. Identity theft involves using someone's identity to commit financial fraud.

In most cases, the victims are unaware their personal information is being fraudulently used until they attempt to make a purchase which requires a credit check. Victims are left with bad credit ratings and the task of

proving their innocence.

Thieves can obtain your personal information by stealing your mail or garbage. If you notice a disruption of your mail service, you should contact the post office immediately. If you see suspicious people or cars near mailboxes, call the police.

Before you throw out documents containing personal information, you should shred them. Don't get a false sense of security

that your information is safe just because your garbage made it into the back of the garbage truck. Even at the dump, your personal information is accessible. Thieves have been known to obtain employment just to have access to refuse.

If you become a victim of identity fraud, here are a few tips you should know:

■ Notify credit bureaus.



ROE ADRIENNE EVANS

■ Alert creditors to put a flag on your accounts.

■ Report it to police.

■ Banks: Close accounts (be sure to have the bank place on your account "closed at customer's request").

■ Keep a log of who you talked to and what happened.

■ Minimize the amount of personal information you carry.

■ Reduce the number of credit cards you have and cancel the ones you don't use. (Most credit card companies report that the account was closed at the consumer's request, but it is a good idea to check with the individual company.)

■ Make a list of all credit cards you have, along with the

customer service numbers.

■ Never give credit card numbers over the phone unless you are the one who made the call.

■ Protect your Social Security number.

■ Invest in a shredder.

Check your monthly statements on a regular basis, and have at least one credit check completed once a year.

Roe-Adrienne Evans is a crime prevention technician with the Farmington Hills Police Department.

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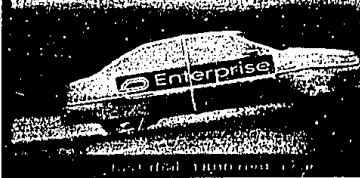
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presence for the community.

"Phase two will provide some more exposure for the departments," he said.

While it has taken Farmington Hills some time to jump on the Internet bandwagon, Murray doesn't feel the city is at all behind the times.

"It's one of those situations where they're not behind by starting now. They can catch up rather quickly," he said.

Account manager Bill Fay added, "Getting a Web site isn't the key. It's getting it right."

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"In our business, we're huge," Murray said, noting 450 of the company's 540 employees in Auburn Hills, Lansing, Toledo,

St. Louis, El Paso and Germany, are technical people.

"The city has picked a good partner. Our focus is long-term relationships with our people. We have a turnover rate of only 7 percent. As a result, we have long-term relationships with our

clients."

Sequela's financial position has been bolstered by the recent acquisition of 80 percent of the company by Minnesota-based Analysts International. Evanoff said the company will remain privately owned and remain in control of its own operations, with no effect on service to Farmington Hills or any other of its customers.

For additional information about the company, check out its Web site, www.sequela.net.

According to Lansing, the target date for the launch of Farmington Hills' Web site will be sometime during the third quarter of this year.

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