

Expert tips can help prevent high tech fraud

An ounce of prevention can save you several pounds/dollars when it comes to computer fraud. Law enforcement experts have some suggestions for companies and individuals trying to avoid fraud:

■ Shred or burn documents, reports, drafts or other material with compromising information or account numbers. "Trashing," which means looking through a business's trash, is a common method criminals use to get such information.

■ Control access of a computer system to only those employees

who need it.

■ Have a written policy covering levels of access for employees and make sure they know what that policy is.

■ Limit access for temporary employees.

■ Do not post or share passwords.

■ Review phone bills frequently.

■ Exercise caution when doing business over the telephone.

■ Train employees to follow each credit card company's authorization procedures.

■ Examine the signature strip on the credit card.

■ Check the signature on the card

against that on the sales slip.

■ Ask for identification that contains a photograph.

■ Look for ghost numbers or letters on a card.

■ If you are suspicious of a purchaser, make a note of appearance, companions, any vehicles used, and identification presented. Call your local police department.

■ Keep a list of your credit card numbers at your home and report them immediately if the cards are stolen.

■ Destroy invoice carbons.

■ Protect your credit cards as though they were cash.

Thieves from page 9A

Teenage hackers often see their criminal acts as a challenging computer game — or may even aid other criminals through a computer bulletin board or network, to avenge a parent by giving out credit-card or account numbers.

But those teen mischief makers of yesterday often go undetected — and undeterred.

"Those kids who started this kind of activity as teenagers 10 years ago are often working in important positions for banks, busi-

nesses, even the government," said the Secret Service's Tony Olivieri. "Now they can do some real damage."

Area crime connection

Olivieri has investigated computer fraud cases in the Detroit area, including two with Farmington Hills connections.

One involved a Farmington Hills man who was convicted of computer fraud last fall in Ann Arbor as part of a network of hackers.

The other case involved what police think is a nationwide computer fraud ring operating from Farmington Hills involving men from Canton, Livonia and Plymouth. That case, which began in February of 1992, is still in the courts, Olivieri said.

Although large corporations are the frequent target of computer fraud because of their size and assets, smaller companies are hit as well. And for a small company, one month's worth of bogus phone bills could spell bankruptcy.

Cheers of a clown



ANN HEALEY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ronald's message: Ronald McDonald gets a hug from Dominique Hagrenan, 7, last Thursday after a drug education program at Longacre Elementary School. Mr. McDonald visited Flanders and Our Lady of Sorrows schools as well as Longacre as part of the Farmington Public Safety Department's THINK program. Officer Terry Purves also spoke to children about the dangers of drugs. Ronald appeared through the help of Efrén Cavazos, owner of McDonald's restaurant on Orchard Lake and 10 Mile Road.

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