

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

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U.S. SECRET SERVICE UNVEILS IDENTITY CRIME RESOURCE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

Over 40,000 Copies to be distributed to state and local police departments

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In an effort to help front-line officers understand and investigate identity crime, the United States Secret Service has joined with other federal agencies and police organizations to create an interactive resource guide that provides useful information regarding identity crime to local and state law enforcement.

The goal of the Identity Crime Interactive Resource Guide is to provide a user-friendly, convenient tool to local and state law enforcement that will enhance their understanding of identity crime, encourage them to become more involved in combating this crime and provide them with a comprehensive guide of both investigative and victim resources.

On July 29, 2003, Secret Service Director Ralph Basham joined U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Department of Homeland Security Deputy Secretary Gordon England on Capitol Hill to announce the release of the Identity Crime interactive resource guide.

“Identity crime is not directed at any particular demographic; instead, it affects all types of Americans, regardless of age, gender, nationality, or race. Victims include everyone from restaurant workers, telephone repair technicians and police officers, to corporate and government executives, celebrities and high-ranking military officers,” Director Basham said. “What victims do have in common is the difficult, time consuming, and potentially expensive task of repairing the damage that has been done to their credit, their savings, and their reputation. We hope, with this resource, to help make that process a little easier.”

The Identity Crime project is a joint effort between the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Federal Trade Commission and consists of two parts. The first is a short 10 minute video designed to be shown at police officer roll call meetings that typically take place before officers begin their daily shift. These roll call meetings are generally used as forums to provide training and pass out pertinent information to police officers.

The second valuable part of the project is a resource guide for law enforcement officers. This resource guide provides more than 40 investigative resources that officers can use in their investigations of identity crime, as well as ten different victim assistance resources officers can use and distribute to members of their community.

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"The cooperation and coordination of law enforcement agencies across the nation are a critical component in the fight against identity theft. The Secret Service has shown time and again that it has the ability to work successfully with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to protect the American people," Senator Hatch said. "I observed this firsthand at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, where the Secret Service joined with other law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety of all who participated in and attended the Olympic Games."

"The Identity Crime Video/CD Rom that has been introduced today is an innovative project that will arm agencies in every state and locality with the essential tools they need to counter identity theft," continued Senator Hatch.

"The resource guide provides yet another critical tool for law enforcement in combating identity theft," commented Federal Trade Commission Chairman Timothy J. Muris. "Coupled with our joint law enforcement training programs throughout the country and use of the FTC's Identity Theft Clearinghouse Database, we're going to make ourselves smarter and more efficient at targeting this serious crime."

Identity crime involves the theft or misuse of personal or financial identifiers in order to gain something of value and/or facilitate other criminal activity. The different types of identity crime addressed in the resource guide include Identity Theft, Credit Card/Access Device Fraud, Check Fraud, Bank Fraud, False Identification Fraud and Passport/Visa Fraud.

Identity crime is important to investigate because it involves multiple victims, usually has a large dollar loss, is often used by organized criminal groups, and is usually associated with other crimes such as drugs/narcotics, mail theft/fraud, electronic crime and terrorism.

The Secret Service was originally established within the Department of the Treasury in 1865 to combat the counterfeiting of U.S. currency. Since that time, the agency has been tasked with the investigation of financial crimes, as well as the protection of the nation's leaders, visiting foreign dignitaries and events of national significance.

With the passage of new federal laws in 1982 and 1984, the Secret Service was provided primary authority for the investigation of access device fraud, including credit and debit card fraud, and parallel authority with other law enforcement agencies in identity crime cases. The explosive growth of these crimes has resulted in the evolution of the Secret Service into an agency that is recognized worldwide for its expertise in the investigation of all types of financial crimes. The agency's efforts to detect, investigate and prevent financial crimes are aggressive, innovative and comprehensive.

"Because most identity crimes fall under the jurisdiction of the Secret Service, we have taken an aggressive stance and continue to be a leading agency for the investigation and prosecution of such criminal activity," Director Basham said.

As part of the new Department of Homeland Security, the Secret Service will continue to be involved in a collaborative effort with the intention of analyzing the potential for identity crime to be used in conjunction with terrorist activities through our liaison efforts with the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Operation Direct Action, FinCEN, the Diplomatic Security Service and the FBI.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: For questions concerning this release, please contact the United States Secret Service Office of Government and Public Affairs at 202-406-5708 or the Federal Trade Commission press office at 202-326-2180.