Identity theft has become one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States. The Federal Trade Commission estimates that as many as 9 million Americans have their identities stolen each year. Identity Theft is a crime in which an impostor obtains key pieces of personal identifying information such as Social Security numbers and driver’s license numbers and uses them for his or her own personal gain. It can start with lost or stolen wallets, pilfered mail, a data breach, computer virus, phishing, a scam, or paper documents thrown out by you or a business (dumpster diving). This crime varies widely, and can include check fraud, credit card fraud, financial identity theft, criminal identity theft, governmental identity theft, and identity fraud.

Add Identity Theft Prevention to Your New Year’s Resolutions

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Start the New Year right:

- Get a FREE annual credit report: www.annualcreditreport.com. Check and review your credit report. Report any discrepancies to the credit reporting agency. Put an alert on your credit if necessary.

- Stop prescreened credit card offers coming to your home: www.optoutprescreen.com or call 1-888-5-OPTOUT.

- Stop tele-marketing calls: www.donotcall.gov

- Stop receiving unwanted catalogs and other telemarketing mail: www.dmachoice.org

- Shred your old credit card, bank statements, bills, etc. to avoid dumpster diving.

- For more information on ID Theft or what to do if you are a victim, please go to www.ftc.gov