



IDENTITY THEFT ASSISTANCE CENTER

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For Immediate Release

SECURE PERSONAL DATA IN ADVANCE OF HURRICANE SEASON, URGES IDENTITY THEFT ASSISTANCE CENTER

Contact your financial institution if forced to temporarily relocate

WASHINGTON, DC, May XX, 2006—In advance of this year’s hurricane season, the Identity Theft Assistance Center (ITAC) is urging individuals take steps to secure their personal data and to educate themselves about potential scams that can lead to identity theft.

“Criminals take advantage of the chaos and misery that follows a natural disaster,” said Anne Wallace, Executive Director of ITAC. “Fortunately, people can take some basic precautions to avoid becoming a victim.”

Individuals who are forced to evacuate high-risk areas often leave behind critical documents such as social security cards, birth certificates and passports. Information from these documents can be used to open accounts in the victim’s name, or to commit other types of fraud, if it falls into the wrong hands.

“We learned from Hurricane Katrina that these documents are critically important to people who are displaced as a result of a disaster because they can be used to verify the evacuees’ identity to access their existing accounts, open a new account, or obtain emergency relief,” said Rodney D. Chard, Executive Vice President, Whitney National Bank, the oldest continuously operating bank in New Orleans. “We also encourage our customers to bring along their check books and ATM cards to pay for purchases during their evacuation and to prevent these items from being stolen from their abandoned homes.”

ITAC urges individuals to take a “Personal Data Inventory” of their records. Critical documents should be stored outside the home, if possible, or

scanned and backed up onto disc. Information that can be used to commit identity theft or other types of fraud can be obtained from birth, death and marriage certificates; social security cards; passports; credit card numbers; medical records; driver's licenses; bank and brokerage account statements; house deeds, mortgage and home equity notes; car titles; and insurance policies.

If you are forced to temporarily relocate, ITAC recommends you take the following steps:

- Contact your financial institution about any suspicious activity
- Contact your financial institution and post office with the address of your temporary residence
- Be prepared to establish your identity

ITAC also urges individuals to be aware of potential scams following a disaster. In the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, for example, criminals posing as Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) employees stole social security numbers and other personal data by pretending to make the information a requirement for receiving emergency aid.

“Consumers should be especially careful about sharing their personal information, particularly social security numbers, whether the request is received from an individual or comes unsolicited through the internet,” said ITAC board member Renee Roth, Senior Vice President and Senior Director of Operations at Synovus, one of the largest financial institutions in the Southeast.

About ITAC

The Identity Theft Assistance Center (ITAC) (www.identitytheftassistance.org) is a cooperative initiative founded by the financial services industry that now welcomes companies in other industries targeted by identity thieves. Since it was established in August 2004, ITAC has helped thousands of consumers restore their financial identities. ITAC shares information with the Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Sentinel database, which can be accessed by more than 1,000 law enforcement agencies nationwide. Part of the ongoing industry focus on combating fraud and identity theft, ITAC is run by the Identity Theft Assistance Corporation, a not-for-profit membership corporation sponsored by The Financial Services Roundtable and BITS.

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