



IDENTITY THEFT ASSISTANCE CENTER

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For Immediate Release

BRING IDENTIFYING DOCUMENTS IF FORCED TO EVACUATE DUE TO FIRE, URGES IDENTITY THEFT ASSISTANCE CENTER

Be prepared to establish identity to make insurance claims, apply for benefits

WASHINGTON, DC, October 25, 2007— The Identity Theft Assistance Center (ITAC) is urging Southern California residents forced by fire to evacuate their homes to bring along identifying documents, such as social security cards, birth certificates, and passports, if possible.

“In a disaster, the first concern is personal safety, but if you have time to make an evacuation plan, protecting your important documents should be part of that plan,” said Anne Wallace, executive director of ITAC. “It will be much easier to prove you are who you say you are in the event you need to open new financial accounts, apply for government benefits, or make insurance claims.”

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

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. ITAC urges individuals to always verify the organization and report to police any suspicious activity.

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

- Contact your financial services company if you think your personal data might be at risk or you detect suspicious activity. You can find a list of [ITAC member company toll free fraud lines](#) on the ITAC website. Under federal law, you are entitled for a [free annual credit report](#) you can review for suspicious activity. Identity protections services like [Identity Guard®](#) (www.identityguard.com), offered by ITAC's partner Intersections Inc., monitor your credit bureau accounts and other vital information for a fee.
- Contact the post office and your financial institution, insurer, mortgage holder, and other account holders with the address of your temporary residence.
- Be prepared to establish your identity to establish new accounts, make insurance claims for apply for government benefits.

About ITAC

The Identity Theft Assistance Center (ITAC) (www.identitytheftassistance.org) is a nonprofit that fights identity theft through victim assistance, research and law enforcement partnerships. ITAC has helped thousands of consumers restore their financial identities and is the leading source of verified data on identity theft crime. Recognized internationally for its innovative model, ITAC is sponsored by The Financial Services Roundtable as part of the financial services industry's commitment to fight fraud and identity theft.

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