

Identity theft analysis



Identity Theft In today's society, there is a white-collar crime that has greatly risen in popularity among criminals. This crime is identity theft. Hundreds of thousands of people have their identities stolen each year. Identity theft is when these criminals obtain and use consumers' personal information such as credit card numbers, bank account numbers, insurance information, and social security numbers to purchase goods or services fraudulently.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, over 1.1 million people were the victim of identity theft. With this number, it is very evident that identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in our country. This paper will attempt to more thoroughly define identity theft. It will give examples of identity theft by examining the stories of Rosalie Pugliese and Mari Frank. It will show ways in which this very easily committed crime can be avoided, and in the extreme case that a person is a victim of identity fraud, to show the steps one can take to get their lives back on track. According to identityguard.com, identity theft is defined as, when someone uses your name or personal information to open a credit account, take out a loan, or make a major purchase. And if they can do it once, they can do it repeatedly, using each new account as a reference for the next one. The result is that identity thieves can run up thousands of dollars worth of charges or obligations all in your name. In our current society, since there have been a great deal of technological advances made, it is easier than ever for a common criminal to steal a social security number, a bank account number, or any other piece of information which could help a criminal gain access to one's personal finances. Identity thieves can retrieve vital information in many different ways. They can look through your trash at home or at work and retrieve a discarded bill, a piece of mail, or a credit application. They can

intercept your mail before it reaches you and take your social security or other information off of it. Identity thieves can pose as a telemarketer, claiming to represent a reputable charity or business, a bank, or even a credit-reporting agency. By doing this, they may be able to coax vital information from a nave consumer. In some states your Social Security number is printed right on your drivers license, so an identity thief can write down your number when you use your license for identification. 1While there was a time when thieves mainly rummaged through discarded mail and trash to attain valuable information, it is just as easy for them now to steal ones identity using the Internet. As one can see, stealing someones identity is a very easy thing and can also be done in a number of different ways. In 1999, an unsuspecting attorney by the name of Rosalie Pugliese was a victim of identity theft. Over a six-week period, not only did the thief run up over sixty-thousand dollars worth of goods and steal credit cards, but also the thief went on to impersonate her victim. In the Post-Gazette on August 26, 1999, staff writer Cristina Rouvalis wrote, The fraudulent purchases trickled in at first — a \$2, 700 bill on a First Union credit card and a \$18. 74 AT&T cell phone bill in mid-December. Pugliese canceled both accounts — which she had never even applied for — and dismissed them as the work of a petty thief doing Christmas shopping on her dime. The bills included an \$8, 000 cash advance at Atlantic City casinos, six thousand dollars worth of jewelry, and a seven thousand dollar Compaq laptop computer, just to name a few. This particular identity thief went above and beyond what most identity thieves do though. As investigators would soon discover, Pugliese’s evil twin didn’t just steal her name to rack up about \$60, 000 in debt. She stole her whole appearance, they said. She fixed her hair like Pugliese’s — a medium-

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length blond cut — and sometimes tied a crisp scarf around her neck when she passed herself off as a professional woman. 2 While this may seem to be a very drastic step to most people, authorities say that this kind of behavior is becoming more and more common among identity thieves. This article reinforces points that will be examined more thoroughly later on in this paper. The article says that, Thieves typically rip off someone else's identity by sorting through the person's trash, stealing mail or buying information from an employee at a bank, hospital or car dealership. Armed with data, the thieves can drain victims' bank accounts, ring up credit card bills in their name, get cash advances and phony loans. 2 The worst part of this whole thing is that Pugliese has no idea whether or not her information will be used again against her. Although she was not held liable to pay any of the bills that were ran up, she is still faced with the never-ending task of rebuilding her credit, unraveling the crazy mess of identity theft, and not to mention, her tireless job as an attorney. The first whiff of trouble came on Dec. 10, when Pugliese saw a Federal Express notice on her door. She drove down to the office to pick it up two days later and was told that "Rosalie" had already picked it up. 2 After this, Pugliese took all of the necessary steps to ensure that her credit was protected. She called all three of the major credit reporting agencies (Transunion, Equifax, and Experian) searching for unauthorized accounts that were opened, she called local police, and she spoke with authorities. But after taking a vacation, she came home to the rude awakening that her impostor had run opened up more accounts and ran up even more bills. Unfortunately, in this case, authorities have been unable to catch the person who has raided the life of an innocent person. As can be seen in this case, catching an identity thief can prove to be a very difficult

task. Although there is no sure-fire way to fully protect yourself from having your identity stolen, there are many steps that can be taken to protect it from happening.

Another case of stolen identity involves an attorney from Orange County, California, named Mari Frank. One day, out of nowhere, she received a call from The Bank of New York in Delaware. “ The Bank of New York in Delaware called to ask why I had not paid my \$11, 000 credit card bill,” Frank said. “ I didn’t have a credit card from that bank, and I certainly hadn’t charged \$11, 000. No one had stolen my wallet, and I had always been careful with confidential documents. I just kept asking — how could this have happened?” As we have seen in the previous case involving Rosalie Pugliese, identity theft is a crime that is becoming easier and easier to commit. Unlike the case involving Pugliese, where the criminal was never found, police were able to track down the thief who invaded the life of Mari Frank. “ The police searched the thief’s mailing address, and found billing statements in my name from various creditors, letters from collection agencies, a letter from a rental car company threatening to sue for damages to a vehicle she’d rented, checks, and my own business cards that she’d taken from my office,” Frank said. After all was said and done, the thief made off with over fifty thousand dollars in merchandise, not to mention the purchase of a red Ford Mustang convertible. Although the thief was eventually tracked down, Mari Frank was presented with the same dilemma that Pugliese had to deal with regarding the difficult task of rebuilding their credit. As easy as it can be to steal ones identity, it is also easy to safeguard ones identity, provided that the individual goes out of their way to protect themselves. One way to see if

there have been any new accounts or loans opened up in your name would be to check with one of the three major credit bureaus and have a copy of your credit report sent to you. In the case previously mentioned, Rosalie Pugliese took these steps after she had learned that her identity was stolen. Unfortunately, she did this after part of the damage had already been done. While it may seem like a nuisance to check with the three major credit reporting bureaus periodically, the hassle involved with that is much less than the hassle involved with attempting to clear up ones credit rating. Also, one should never give away their social security number to any business or individual unless it is absolutely necessary. To help prevent this from happening, one should not carry their social security card or any extra credit cards unless it is absolutely necessary. Another step that can be taken in the fight against identity fraud is to either shred, tear, or burn any old bills or documents that have personal information on them. With this step being taken, a criminal cannot go through ones trash searching for personal documents. Also, when receiving bills in the mail, it is very important to carefully scrutinize them to make sure that no unauthorized transactions have occurred. Another important thing to do is to use common sense. It is smart to avoid talking in public about private accounts; it is smart to only deposit mail in secure places, most ideally inside of a post office. Also try to make account passwords difficult enough that they cannot be guessed by anybody else and also try to memorize your Social Security number so that the card does not have to be carried around and possibly get lost. Finally, file an ID theft affidavit with the Federal Trade Commission. By doing this, the FTC lets most major companies and organizations that a persons identity has been stolen. The best defense against identity theft is to remain on top of

the information in your credit profile and also to try and keep a good record of daily transactions involving identity information. Even with all of the steps previously mentioned, there is no way to be totally protected against identity theft. If for some unfortunate reason, a person is the victim of identity theft, there are a lot of steps that the victim needs to take in order to clear their name of any liability and perhaps most importantly, restore their credit history. The very first thing that needs to be done is to file a report with your local police or file a report with the police department in the township that the white-collar crime was committed in. Another important thing to consider would be to cancel all accounts and then open up new accounts with new account numbers. Also, it can be helpful to write short letters to all three of the credit reporting agencies describing the events that occurred. The three agencies are Equifax, Experian, and Transunion. By doing this, they will be able to flag all unauthorized accounts and make sure that no new accounts are opened up without the consumers permission. After writing letters to the three credit bureaus, then it is important to first call, and then write the individual creditor to let them know that a fraudulent act was committed. After calling the individual creditor, then the Federal Trade Commission must be called to inform them of theft. When someone is a victim of identity theft, even though they are not liable for the money that has been charged under their name, they are very much responsible for getting rid of the unauthorized accounts and restoring credit. This may prove to be a very painstaking effort since most credit companies hate dealing with these types of issues. It is very important, though, to stay persistent in the effort to restore a good credit rating. Identity theft, according to the Federal Trade Commission, is one of the fastest growing crimes in the country. It may be <https://assignbuster.com/identity-theft-analysis/>

the fastest growing white-collar crime out there. With nothing more than your name, your Social Security number, and date of birth, the only thing that can limit an identity thief is the thief's creativity. They are able to do anything from open credit card accounts to open accounts and take out loans. With this basic information, they can get a job in your name, possibly tarnishing an honest person's good name. They can apply for anything from cell phones to health insurance. With more than 1.1 million victims of identity theft each year, it is very important to know how to protect yourself from identity theft. It is just as, if not more important to know what to do in the case that your identity is stolen.