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## **Is Your Identity Secure? Let's Make Sure!**

By Shannon McGinnis

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in America. Victims come from all walks of life - from everyday people to celebrities like Tiger Woods and Rosie O'Donnell.

According to the Federal Trade Commission which operates a nationwide identity theft hotline, there were 43,839 victims reported from California in 2004. California, with 122 victims per 100,000 population, ranked third in the nation behind Nevada and Arizona.

**What Is Identity Theft?** Identity theft" means the unauthorized use of another person's personal identifying information to obtain credit, goods, services, money, or property.

Identity theft occurs when someone gains access to another person's personal information, such as the drivers license number, social security number, bank or credit card account numbers, and uses them to commit fraud or theft. An impostor can use your identity to open fraudulent credit accounts, secure loans for cars and housing, or steal money from your bank accounts.

Please protect yourself and protect all of your "Personal identifying information" such as your name, address, telephone number, driver's license number, social security number, place of employment, employee identification number, mother's maiden name, deposit account number, savings account number, or credit card numbers.

**Shred anything that has any of this information on it. Recycling your personal identifying information is dangerous.** Dumpster diving has become the primary method for criminals to obtain confidential information to commit **Identity Theft and Corporate Vandalism**. Casually discarded information has resulted in a wave of crime.

Every home should have a shredder but if you have large volumes of documents to shred, contact: DOCUMENT SHREDDING SERVICE, Paula Brown: 831-476-3059, 831-566-0219

At your residence, eliminate as much junk mail as possible, including those pervasive credit card and mortgage offers by **removing Your Name from Mail and Phone Lists**. Write to:

**Direct Marketing Association**  
Mail Preference Association  
P.O. Box 9008  
Farmingdale, NY 11735

**Telephone Preference Service**  
P.O. Box 9014  
Farmingdale, NY 11735

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