

BERNALILLO COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

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**IDENTITY THEFT**

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the federal clearinghouse for complaints by victims of identity theft. The commission assists victims of identity theft by providing them with information to help resolve the financial and other problems that can result from identity theft. The FTC also may refer victim complaints to other appropriate government agencies for further actions. If you are a victim of ID theft, you can file a complaint with the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office as well as the FTC. You can reach the FTC by calling 877-ID-THEFT (877-438-4338) or via the Internet at <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>.

**Here are some steps you can take to help safeguard you and your accounts from being compromised.**

Protect your account information and numbers. Never give out financial information, including your social security number, to anyone unless you initiate the contact and know the person or organization you are dealing with. Report lost or stolen checks immediately to your bank and your local law enforcement agency. Your bank will be able to safeguard your accounts and return any fraudulent checks to the merchants who accepted them. Store all canceled and new checks securely. Always try to keep new books of checks and all canceled checks in a safe place, away from common areas of your residence, but not in your garage or a storage shed. Be aware of suspicious phone inquiries. Notify your bank immediately if you receive a call from someone claiming to be from a financial institution who asks for you account information. Your financial institution will never ask you to verify your account numbers with them.

Guard your ATM PIN number. Try not to use obvious or easily attainable information as your PIN number and destroy old ATM receipts as they may contain valuable account information on them. Destroy financial solicitations you receive in the mail. If you decide you are not interested in a financial solicitation that you received in the mail, tear it up or shred it. This prevents someone from taking it from your garbage, filling it out, and having an account opened with your information. Do not put outgoing mail in or on your mailbox. Always try to deposit your mail in a secure, official Postal Service collection box. If you decide to put your mail in your mailbox, do not place the red flag up and do not place your mail in the box the night before a pick up. This is a signal to thieves that there is mail in your box for them to steal. The post office will know that all the mail in your box is to be taken by them. Keep track of incoming bills. If your regular bills fail to reach you, contact the company and find out why. Someone might have filled out a false change-of-address notice to divert your mail to another address.