

*COURTESY OF THE PORTLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT*

## **Steps to combat identity theft**

Identity theft and fraud are serious crimes against individuals. If someone uses your personal information to commit fraud or other crimes, it takes a long time to clear your credit record. Taking precautions to safeguard your personal information can help protect you from becoming a victim of identity theft.

“Identity theft is not going to go away. But there is a lot we can do to make it harder for thieves to victimize people,” said Assistant Chief Jim Ferraris of the Portland Police Bureau.

The following are steps to combat identity theft:

- Shred all of your personal documents (financial information, account numbers, and documents with your name and address)
- Get a locked mail box and use a secure mailbox for outgoing mail
- Don't carry extra credit cards or your social security card in your wallet, purse, or back pack
- Don't leave your automobile registration and insurance card in the glove compartment of your car
- Monitor your bank and credit accounts
- Be careful about giving your personal information over the internet or phone, often websites or callers will seem credible
- Review your credit report twice a year

Identity theft is a felony crime. Notify the police if you suspect that you are a victim of identity theft. Also, contact your banks, credit card companies, and the credit reporting agencies to inform them of the fraud. If someone has stolen your passport, drivers license, or social security card, be sure to notify the Department of Motor Vehicles and the appropriate federal agency.

“Keep vigilant, do what you can to protect your personal information. Reporting identity theft to your local police department is an important first step that can aid in the apprehension of identity theft rings,” said Sergeant Amber Lewis, of the Portland Police Bureau's Fraud Detail.

The Police Bureau's Detective Division Fraud Detail recently released a new brochure detailing information on identity theft, including information on how to minimize your risk of being victimized and what to do to repair your credit if someone has stolen your personal information. The brochure is available on the Portland Police Bureau's website, [www.portlandpolicebureau.com](http://www.portlandpolicebureau.com), in the brochures section under the publications tab. If you are a victim of identity theft, this publication lists resources for cleaning up your credit record.

