



## Mail Fraud



Because most identity theft involves the U.S. Mail, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service has become a lead agency in investigating these crimes. Postal Inspectors have jurisdiction to investigate and enforce more than 200 federal statutes involving the U.S. Mail. Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 1708, allows Postal Inspectors to arrest anyone suspected of stealing mail or filing a false change-of-address order. The penalty is a \$2,000 fine, up to five years' imprisonment, or both. If someone applies for a credit card in your name, they may be prosecuted under Title 18, USC 1341. The penalty is a \$1,000 fine or up to five years' imprisonment, or both -- unless a financial institution is affected, in which case the fine may be raised to \$1 million and imprisonment may be ordered for up to 30 years.

The United States Postal Inspection Services lists the following as the more common Mail Fraud Schemes:

### **Employment Fraud**

Distributorship and Franchise Fraud  
Phony Job Opportunities  
Multi-Level Marketing  
Six-Cent and Other Short-Paid Postage  
Postal Job Scams: Don't Fall For a Con Game  
Work-at-Home Schemes

### **Financial Fraud**

"900" Telephone Number Fraud  
Advance-Fee Loan Schemes  
Charity Fraud  
Credit Card Fraud  
Schemes that Charge Money for Services the Government Provides for Free  
Cut-Rate Health Insurance Fraud  
Investment Fraud  
Solicitations Disguised as Invoices  
Oil and Gas Investment Fraud  
Land Fraud

### **Fraud against Older Americans**

Sweepstakes and Lottery Fraud  
Illegal Sweepstakes Information  
Chain Letters  
Free-Prize Scheme  
Foreign Lotteries By Mail: "Don't Do It!"  
Government Look-Alike Mail  
Free Vacation Scams

## **Telemarketing Fraud**

Rules for Telephone Solicitations

Characteristics of Telemarketing Fraud

## **Other Types of Mail Fraud**

Home Improvement and Home Repair Fraud

Phony Inheritance Scam

Receipt of Unsolicited Merchandise

Missing Persons Fraud

Prison Pen Pal Money Order Scam

Fraudulent Health and Medical Products

Additional information concerning the many different types of mail fraud can be located by visiting the United States Postal Inspection Service website at:

[www.usps.com/postalinspectors/fraud](http://www.usps.com/postalinspectors/fraud)

Examples of other Mail Fraud include, mail stolen from your mailbox, forgery of checks mailed to you in the mail, criminals stealing your checks you have written for payment of bills in furtherance of other criminal activity, check washing, credit card fraud, and identity theft.

The Lee County Sheriff's Office Economic Crimes Unit encourages citizens to guard their mail and trash. You never know whose lurking in your garbage, without even stealing your wallet, a criminal can steal your financial identity. Using a variety of methods, mail theft and/or digging through your garbage, a criminal can gain enough information to obtain a person's credit card numbers, social security numbers, bank accounts numbers/information, telephone calling card numbers, and other key pieces of an individual's identity. Using your identity, the criminal can not only access your preexisting accounts, but the criminal can open new accounts in your name, and begin using these accounts to charge large amounts of money in the victim's name. Once the fraud is detected and the accounts closed, the criminal will simply move on to the next unsuspected victim and start the process all over again.



## **AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM:**

- Don't leave mail in your mailbox overnight on weekends; deposit outgoing mail at the post office and promptly remove mail from your mailbox after delivery.
- Shred or tear up unwanted documents that contain personal information before discarding them in the trash.
- Every year, order and thoroughly review copies of your credit report from each of the three major credit reporting agencies.
- Never give personal identifying information over the telephone or the Internet unless *you* initiated the contact.

**If you become a victim of Mail Fraud:**

- Act quickly and be persistent!
- Follow up with creditors in writing
- Keep an organized file including any correspondence you have received and documentation you have collected

If you're a victim of identity theft and the U.S. Mail is involved, call your nearest Postal Inspection Service Office and your local law enforcement office. The contact information for the nearest Postal Inspection Service Office serving Lee County is: [Postal Inspection Service, 3400 Lakeside Drive FL 6, Miramar, Florida 33027-3742, Telephone: \(877\) 876-2455.](#)

Visit the Federal Trade Commission's Website at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov); the FTS is the federal government's central consumer assistance and information center. The FTC provides educational materials and self-help tools, as well as an online reporting form. The FTC also maintains a toll-free hotline at 1-877-ID-THEFT, with consumer counselors available to assist victims.

Report credit card fraud to the three major credit reporting bureaus: Equifax: 800-525-6285, Experian: 888-397-3742, and TransUnion: 800-680-7289.