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Forensic/Litigation & Valuation Service Group

Identity Theft Alert

Dear Clients and Friends of the Firm:

Planning on travelling this summer? Well if you step out of your front door, take care. The one crime that has come to dominate the digital age is, you guessed it, IDENTITY THEFT. Although it's impossible to completely stop the possibility of identity theft, you can lessen the likelihood of it happening to you and your family.

There are two types of identity theft. The first is known as the "account takeover". This is where a criminal will simply use your existing bank account and credit card to run up large bills. The second type of identity theft is known as the "application fraud". This is where a thief takes your information and opens new accounts in your name. Obviously, an application fraud can take longer to detect, because the address given to companies will not be your real one.

You cannot believe how easy it is to obtain someone's credit card number or even their bank details. For example:

- Remember that loan application you filled out then threw in the trash? There's a gold mine of information on that paper!
- Someone standing too close to you at the ATM? They could be "shoulder surfing" for your PIN.
- Pre-approved credit card offers that come in the mail? What if someone took one, filled it out, and instead of your address they put down their own?
- And how about all those emails from "your bank" asking you to click a link and verify all your details? 99.99% of those emails are "phishing" schemes.

So, how do you protect yourself from identity theft? Well, the first thing is to know what you've got. Make a list of all your credit and debit cards, including their contact telephone numbers, and keep it in a safe place. Never carry more than two credit cards and a debit card with you, in case of theft. If you're going to be around people, for example on a vacation tour, keep your wallet in a less accessible place. And, whenever you use an ATM, use your hand to shield your PIN number.

Protecting your personal information takes a mix of caution, common sense and a suspicious mind. You can't be too careful. But then again, it's your identity that you are protecting.

Should you have any questions please feel free to contact me at 212-303-9009 or e-mail me at apruskowski@rsmcpa.com.

Sincerely,

Alfred M. Pruskowski, CPA, CVA, CFF
Partner-in-Charge of Forensic and Valuation Services

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