

## Prevention Is the Best Way to Fight Identity Theft

Identity theft has steadily become a major problem for law enforcement over the last seven years, says Lt. Tom Hansen of the Brentwood Police Department.

Federal and police officials say it is now the fastest growing crime in the nation.

What makes it more difficult is that the thieves are anonymous and can be anywhere in the world, says Hansen.

The Federal Trade Commission announced in January that more than 37 percent of all the consumer fraud complaints it received in 2005 dealt exclusively with identity theft.

"When you become a victim, it can be really tedious and expensive to clear up your credit," Hansen says. "You have to make calls and write to creditors requesting that charges be reversed."

Over the past year Brentwood's Police

Department has received roughly 40 reports of identity theft. Most of them dealt with someone using a victim's credit card to make purchases over the internet.

Once victimized, it isn't just a matter of writing a few letters and getting things cleared up, officials say. It can take months or longer to resolve issues stemming from a stolen identity. The best way to deal with it is to prevent it.

Never respond to emails from strangers requesting personal information or to emails that appear to be from your bank, credit union, stock brokerage firm or other financial institution.

Verify that telephone callers or internet solicitors are genuine before divulging any personal information such as your date of birth, mother's maiden name, your address, Social Security or driver's license

number, your bank account number and credit card information, says Hansen.

Invest in cross-cut shredders to make sure that all your sensitive mail or unwanted records are thoroughly shredded before being discarded, says Hansen.

Consumers should never carry their Social Security cards in wallets or purses.

At an ATM, be sure no one can see what code you enter. If others are around, block their view with your hand or body.

Hansen says there have been instances where cameras were positioned over an ATM to capture the identification number victims punched into the keyboard.

The FTC recommends that victims of identity theft contact the fraud departments at any of the three credit reporting agencies, TransUnion, Equifax or Experian, and file a fraud alert.

The credit agency you contact must then alert the other two about the fraud alert, which asks creditors to contact you before creating new accounts or making changes to your existing accounts.

Close any accounts you suspect have been created through fraud and alert local police and file a report with the FTC.

For information on contacting those agencies and more details on preventing or resolving identity theft issues go to [www.consumer.gov/idtheft](http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft).

## City Seeks Lifeguards for Summer Season

The Brentwood Parks and Recreation Department is looking for lifeguards to work at the City's pools this summer.

Lifeguards must be certified. The training to earn the certification costs \$170.

Applicants must be at least 15 years old, able to swim 200 yards, tread water without using their hands and retrieve a 10-pound brick from the bottom of the City's deepest pool, according to Recreation Supervisor Mac Kaiser.

During training, lifeguards learn basic

pool safety, life saving and CPR among other skills. Applicants who previously have worked for the City as lifeguards still must be certified.

Lifeguards are paid \$8 per hour.

Training sessions begin May 18.

Applicants may download an application form off the City website at [www.ci.brentwood.ca.us](http://www.ci.brentwood.ca.us) or pick up an application at the Family Aquatics Center, 195 Griffith Lane or call (925) 516-5444 for information.

## Highway 4 Bypass to Connect with Marsh Creek, Vasco Roads

Construction is scheduled to begin in June for Segment 3 of the State Route Highway 4 Bypass.

This project will extend the existing Highway 4 Bypass (Segment 2) from Balfour Road to Marsh Creek Road and widen Marsh Creek Road to a two-lane expressway as a connection back to existing State Route 4 toward Discovery Bay and Stockton.

The work includes widening Marsh Creek Road for approximately 4.5 miles with new shoulders to bring it up to

conventional highway standards.

The project also calls for two additional lanes to be constructed from the Marsh Creek Road-Highway 4 Bypass intersection to Vasco Road (at Walnut Boulevard) for traffic traveling to and from the Interstate 580 and Livermore area.

The entire project will include the construction of two bridges, eight miles of new and/or widened road, five intersections with signal lights, three detention basins, sound walls and drainage improvements at a total estimated cost of

\$50 million.

When completed, the expressway from Balfour Road to the existing State Route 4 will be maintained by Caltrans.

The portion of the project from Marsh Creek Road to Vasco Road will be maintained and operated by Contra Costa County.

Officials say the project should be completed by December 2007. It is funded by regional transportation mitigation fees paid by developers of new homes in the East County area.