



NETWORK NEWS

NETWORK NEWS IS A PUBLICATION OF CONSUMER SENTINEL, LAW ENFORCEMENT'S SOURCE FOR CONSUMER COMPLAINTS

IDENTITY THEFT AFFIDAVIT.

Identity theft victims may choose to fill in the ID Theft Affidavit form by hand. But now Sentinel makes it easier for them to generate a PDF of their ID Theft Affidavit – to save or print – when they file their identity theft complaint with the FTC. Here's how the process works:

Online at ftc.gov/complaint

1. The victim begins the complaint process by completing as many details as they can about the identity theft and clicking "Submit." This takes them to a screen confirming receipt of the complaint.
2. At the bottom of the confirmation screen, there's a link to "Identity Theft Affidavit." Clicking on this link creates a pdf of the now-completed Affidavit. There is no other opportunity to generate a pdf of the completed Affidavit.

By Phone at 1-877-ID-THEFT

1. The call center counselor gives the victim a complaint Reference Number and password.
2. If appropriate, the Sentinel system emails a link to the victim to access the Affidavit.
3. The victim clicks that link and enters the Reference Number, Affidavit password and their email address to download the completed affidavit as a PDF.

You can update a victim's complaint in Sentinel with the victim's complaint Reference Number and certain other information; you also can get a copy of the victim's Affidavit by calling 1-877-ID-THEFT and providing your credentials and the victim's information. ■■■

STAT-o-SPHERE

"Wire transfer" was the method of payment in 44% of the 2010 complaints that included information on the method of payment, up from 21% in 2009.

These complaints alone represented more than \$144 million in consumer losses. [Consumer Sentinel Network Data Book for January – December 2010.](#) ■■■

OPERATION EMPTY PROMISES.

The FTC has stepped up its ongoing campaign against scammers who falsely guarantee jobs and the chance to "be your own boss" to people who are unemployed and struggling with diminished incomes. "Operation Empty Promises" is a multi-agency law enforcement initiative with 90 actions brought by the Commission and its law enforcement partners, including 48 criminal actions by the U.S. Department of Justice, seven civil actions by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and 28 state actions in Alaska, California, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Montana, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Washington, and the District of Columbia. [Read the press release.](#) ■■■

IVY CAPITAL.

In one pending **Empty Promises case**, the FTC has charged that Ivy Capital and 29 co-defendants have taken more than \$40 million from people who responded to ads for help in starting their own businesses. According to the FTC, Ivy Capital's telemarketers convinced people to use a big chunk of their available credit – as much as \$20,000 – to buy a business coaching program. A federal judge in Nevada temporarily stopped Ivy Capital's unlawful practices, froze its assets, and appointed a receiver. ■■■

COMMUNITY BEAT.

Imposter scams were the sixth highest complaint category for 2010. You have the opportunity to help the people in your community be alert to signs of these scams. What should you tell them?

- ♦ Scammers want people to wire money because it's like sending cash; once it's gone, it can't be recovered. Don't send a check or money order by overnight delivery or courier, either.
- ♦ They want people to pay to collect their winnings. Legitimate sweepstakes don't require anyone to pay insurance, taxes, or shipping to claim prizes. No matter how convincing the reasons, never send money to claim a prize.
- ♦ They claim to be with a government agency. They may try to get people to send money by claiming to be with the FBI, FTC, IRS, U.S. Customs and Border Protection or the U.S. Marshals Service. They might even use a real employee's name and a Washington, D.C., phone number to add to their credibility.
- ♦ They claim to be someone you care about. You think it's your grandson calling, panicked because he needs you to wire money to help him fix a car, get out of jail or a hospital emergency room, or leave a foreign country – and he's depending on you not to tell his parents. Or a stranded friend e-mails and asks you to wire money overseas. In reality, it's a scammer who sleuthed out your grandchild's name, or hacked your friend's email account. To make sure it's not really a loved one in trouble, call a number you know to be genuine, and check the story out with other people in your circle. You also can ask the caller some questions that a stranger couldn't possibly answer.
- ♦ They want you to act immediately, if not sooner. The key to successful impostor scams is getting you to send money before you find out who's really on the other end. Resist the pressure to act before you've checked out the story.

Learn more about imposter scams. ■■■

SENTINEL DATABOOK.

The FTC has released the list of top consumer complaints the agency received in 2010. For the 11th year in a row, identity theft was the number one consumer complaint category. Of the more than 1.3 million complaints the agency received in 2010, more than 250,000 – or 19 percent – were related to identity theft. Debt collection complaints were in second place, with more than 144,000 complaints. For the first time, “imposter scams” – where imposters posed as friends, family, respected companies or government agencies to get consumers to send them money – made the top 10. The report breaks out complaint data by state and has data about the 50 metropolitan areas reporting the highest per capita incidence of fraud and other complaints. In addition, the report notes 50 metropolitan areas reporting the highest incidence of identity theft.

Read the report. ■■■

NEW MEMBERS.

Sentinel has added 11 new members: the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Financial Stability; the Ohio Attorney General's Office, Charitable Law Section; a Royal Canadian Mounted Police Division, the U.S. Marine Corps Criminal Investigation Division at Air Station Miramar, and police departments in Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia.

Sentinel also welcomes the Attorney Generals of Michigan, Oregon, and Washington as data contributors. Catalog Choice, a non-profit organization that helps people opt-out of receiving catalogs and other unsolicited mailings, also is contributing data. ■■■