



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **'STOP IDENTITY THEFT NOW' EDUCATIONAL VIDEO PROGRAM UNVEILED BY JUSTICE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS IN LOS ANGELES**

*FIRST-EVER COURSE TO DETER IDENTITY THEFT MADE AVAILABLE  
AT NO CHARGE TO ANY ORGANIZATION IN UNITED STATES*

In an effort to protect the public and combat one of the fastest-growing crimes in the country, the United States Attorney's Office and the United States Trustee's Office in Los Angeles have developed an educational video program called "Stop Identity Theft Now." The 23-minute video, which is being made available to the public at no charge on VHS tape and DVD, is the nation's first comprehensive, proactive program that focuses on educating attendees *before* they become victims.

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States. While there are no precise statistics on the number of victims, the Federal Trade Commission received nearly 162,000 complaints of identity theft last year, almost double the number of complaints received in 2001.

"Stop Identity Theft Now" clearly presents simple steps that everyone can take to protect themselves from being a victim of identity theft. The program addresses five major topics related to identity theft:

- What is identity theft?
- How does an identity thief get your personal information?

- How does an identity thief use your personal information?
- How can you protect yourself from identity theft? and
- What should you do if you are an identity theft victim?

“With an increasing number of identity theft cases being prosecuted by my office and other prosecutors around the country, this educational program comes at exactly the right time,” said United States Attorney Debra W. Yang. “It is my pleasure to offer this informative program free of charge. It is my hope that the messages in ‘Stop Identity Theft Now’ will affect many thousands of Americans by helping them avoid being a victim.”

The U.S. Attorney’s Office has contacted local television stations, public access stations, and the broadcast networks in an effort to have the tape played as a public service announcement to educate and hopefully protect as many people as possible.

The program is available by making a toll-free call to the Victim-Witness Unit in the United States Attorney’s Office in Los Angeles at (888) 228-0315.

While the video and supporting documents can be easily played to any group, the program may also be presented “live” by any instructor. A computerized slide show and the script used in the video are also available on a CD-ROM in both English and Spanish.

The program includes two pamphlets that contain valuable information. One pamphlet outlines information discussed in the video, and it can be used as a reference guide. The second pamphlet has information on federal resources that are available to identity theft victims nationwide.

The United States Attorney’s Office in the Central District of California is an arm of the Justice Department and is responsible for prosecuting federal crimes in the most populous judicial district in the nation. The office, which is headed by United States Attorney Debra W. Yang, serves approximately 18 million residents in the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo.

The United States Trustee’s Office, also an arm of the Justice Department, is

responsible for overseeing all bankruptcy filings in the nation. The use of false names and social security numbers in bankruptcy filings is a significant problem in the Central District of California. It damages the credit records of innocent victims and creates an inaccurate official Bankruptcy Court record. The U.S. Trustee now requires a photo identification card and the social security number of every debtor when they attend the required meeting of creditors.

U.S. Trustee Maureen Tighe stated: "We have uncovered numerous identity problems through our debtor identification program. It is essential to ensuring that people do not use the bankruptcy system to hide their true identities or to delay evictions and foreclosures in properties they wrongfully obtained with false identities."

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