



Financial Crimes Enforcement Network

A bureau of the U.S. Department of the Treasury

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FinCEN Releases Latest Edition of *SAR Activity Review—By the Numbers* Reveals Greater Level of Suspected Fraud in Seven Categories

VIENNA, Va. – The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) today released its latest and 12th edition of [*The SAR Activity Review – By the Numbers*](#). The report shows a continued overall rise in Suspicious Activity Report (SAR) filings including an increase in depository institution filings related to all seven areas of suspected fraud listed on the SAR form. In 2008, the total volume of all SARs filed revealed a 3 percent increase as compared to a 16 percent increase the prior year. SARs filed by depository institutions increased by 12.85 percent as compared to 2007. *By the Numbers* presents a compilation of numerical data gathered from SARs filed in 2008, plus graphical interpretations, by industry and by region, and comparisons to prior years.

The report reveals that of the 20 different violation types tracked, seven of the categories relate specifically to fraud and all seven showed an increase in SAR filings during the year. While these categories represent one-third of the possible violation types, they accounted for nearly half of the increase in total SAR filings from 2007 to 2008, with all of the fraud categories seeing double-digit increases in percentage of filings in 2008. These categories are: check fraud, mortgage loan fraud, consumer loan fraud, wire transfer fraud, commercial loan fraud, credit card fraud, and debit card fraud.

“SAR data continue to provide an overview of our financial fraud climate. FinCEN’s maps provide broad geographic and regional data, which allow for meaningful comparison between and among States. Most importantly, this solid, objective, information allows law enforcement to better deploy limited resources,” said FinCEN Director James H. Freis, Jr.

Ongoing FinCEN analysis of the data suggests some possible reasons for the increases. Fraud may be reported in association with other suspected crimes, or a SAR may indicate several types of suspected fraud being perpetrated by the same suspect. For instance, of the total number of reported instances of identity theft SARs filed by depository institutions, approximately 35

percent were listed in combination with credit card fraud and/or one or more other violations such as check fraud or consumer loan fraud.

In addition, Freis noted that SAR filers are becoming increasingly aware of the methods and indicators of suspected fraudulent activity. “While increases in reporting of suspected fraudulent activity could mean that there is an increase in fraud, it also reflects an increase in awareness within financial institutions detecting such activity,” said Freis. “For example, institutions that file SARs are more aware today of the types of mortgage fraud being perpetrated, and are more likely to file a SAR. I hope our data and our outreach to the industry continues to facilitate that.”

By the Numbers serves as a companion piece to the [SAR Activity Review - Trends, Tips & Issues](#), which together provide information about the preparation, use, and utility of SARs.

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The mission of the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network is to safeguard the financial system from the abuses of financial crime, including terrorist financing, money laundering, and other illicit activity. We achieve this mission by: administering the Bank Secrecy Act; supporting law enforcement, intelligence, and regulatory agencies through sharing and analysis of financial intelligence; building global cooperation with our counterpart financial intelligence units; and networking people, ideas, and information.