

# SAFETY SENSE

## Protect Your Money With Direct Deposit

(NAPSA)—Is your money at risk?

Identity theft is the most common consumer complaint in America today, according to the Federal Trade Commission. Frequently, the victims are seniors and other vulnerable Americans—many of whom depend on their Social Security check to arrive in their mailbox each month.

The fact is, paper checks put your money at risk. The U.S. Department of the Treasury reports that in 2006 alone, 57,000 Social Security and other Treasury-issued checks were forged—totaling \$54 million. Checks can be stolen, fraudulently endorsed, and cashed by thieves right under your nose—and even in your own home. A recent *Go Direct* poll revealed that 30 percent of Americans have had a check, important document or large sum of cash stolen—with one in five saying that the culprit was a family member or member of the household.

The good news is there's a simple step people can take to protect themselves from fraud, identity theft and other financial crimes. Choose direct deposit. Through the *Go Direct* campaign, the U.S. Department of the Treasury and Federal Reserve Banks are encouraging people who receive Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and other federal benefit payments to switch to direct deposit.

Direct deposit offers protection from identity theft, but it's also a good way to avoid more common mishaps with paper checks, such as mail delays, inclement weather, illness and other circumstances that can either delay when you receive your check or prevent you from being able to cash or deposit it when you need to.

The U.S. Treasury recommends direct deposit for all recipients of federal benefits—and the public at large. Direct deposit is simply the best way to receive your regular payment because:

- It's safer. It eliminates the risk of stolen checks and forgeries because your money goes straight into your account at the same time each month.

- It's easier than checks, because people who receive the payments don't need to go to the bank or credit union to deposit a check.

- It gives you more control. Direct deposit is completely predictable—you know you'll have your money at the same time each month.

- Direct deposit allows immediate access to your money from virtually anywhere. It gives you the freedom to travel or spend time with your family. There's no reason to wait for the mail to arrive.

Switching from a paper check to direct deposit of your Social Security or other federal benefits is easy:

- Call the free *Go Direct* helpline at (800) 333-1795;

- Sign up online at [www.GoDirect.org](http://www.GoDirect.org) or [www.DirectoASuCuenta.org](http://www.DirectoASuCuenta.org);

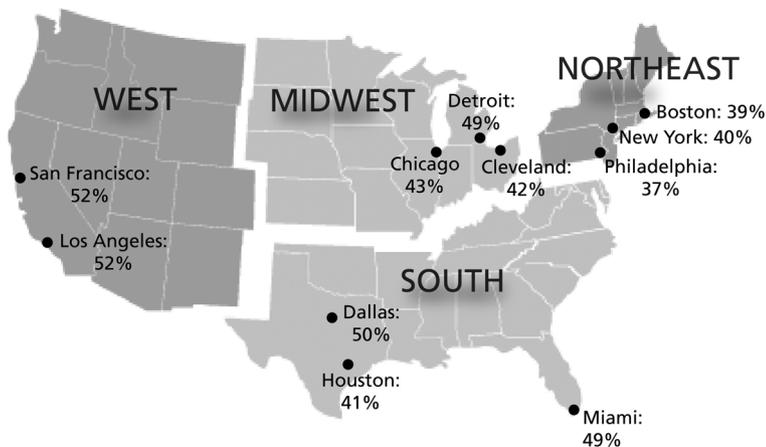
- Visit your local bank, credit union or Social Security office.

"Direct deposit is an easy step Americans can take to protect themselves from financial crimes," said Alvina McHale, *Go Direct* project director for the Treasury. "When there's a problem with a Social Security payment, nine times out of 10 it's with a paper check, not a direct deposit payment."

The preceding information is provided by the Treasury and the Federal Reserve Banks as part of their *Go Direct* campaign.

## Identity Theft in America:

Percentage of Americans in select cities who have been victims of identity theft or know someone who has



Source: U.S. Department of the Treasury



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