

SAFETY SENSE

Protecting Yourself Against Identity Theft

(NAPSA)—Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in America. Fortunately, there are ways to protect yourself.

The Federal Trade Commission recently reported that complaints of identity theft nearly doubled in 2002—last year alone nearly one million people had their identity stolen.

The average victim can spend more than 175 hours of their personal time and more than \$800 to clear their names and restore their good credit ratings—and it often takes between two and four years for victims to clear up the resulting problems.

Identity theft, by definition, is the unauthorized transfer or use of another person's identification with the intent to commit unlawful activity.

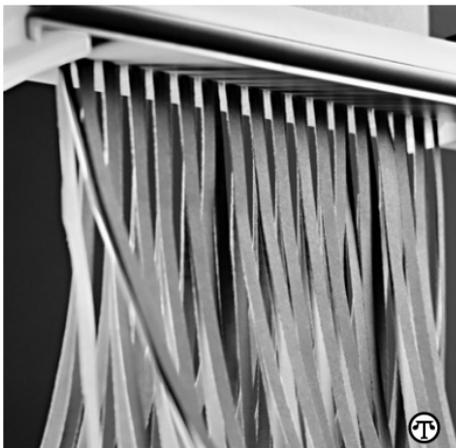
The crime occurs when someone fraudulently uses an individual's personal information to apply for a loan, credit card, driver's license or even a job. Identity theft can lead to a ruined credit rating, a tarnished reputation and even wrongful imprisonment.

As awareness about identity theft grows, more Americans are realizing the importance of using document-shredding machines to ensure that personal records don't end up in the wrong hands.

"Today, between 6 and 8 million shredders are sold each year—and that number is increasing at a rate of 10 to 15 percent annually," said James Fellowes, CEO for Illinois-based Fellowes, Inc., a leading manufacturer of commercial and personal paper shredders.

When selecting a shredder, consider four basic factors:

Daily Usage: Think about how much you'll shred in a day, then



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double it. Most users shred twice as much as they think they will.

The biggest difference between shredders is the varying levels of motor efficiency, duty cycle and speed. Also, it is important to keep in mind the number of pages the user can feed through it.

Security Levels: Some shredders offer a "strip cut," which provides cost-effective, good security by shredding paper into unreadable strips.

Another type of shredder which goes one step further for added security, is a confetti (or cross-cut) shredder, which produces smaller, confetti-like pieces. The finer cut also reduces waste bulk, which also means not emptying the basket as often.

Specialty Shredding: Look for shredders capable of shredding staples and paperclips for added convenience. Some of today's latest shredders can destroy credit cards and even CDs, such as the new Fellowes PS70-2CD, available at major office superstores.

For more information, visit www.fellowes.com.