



**ENVIRONICS
COMMUNICATIONS**

NewsWatch

Toronto Star

1,165,800

January 20, 2007

TORONTO STAR

www.thestar.com

INFORMATION THEFT

TheStar.com - Business - Security firms boom Security firms boom



DICK LOEK/TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

Alarm over the rise in information theft has spurred the growth of an industry built on corporate and consumer fears.

How to prevent fraud, identity theft

Surya Bhattacharya
Business Reporter

*Sign up for online access to your bank and credit card records to better monitor your day-to-day transactions.

*Collect your receipts. Don't leave them in purchase bags, even if they are innocuous amounts. Receipts may contain important banking information.

*Never say no to a receipt, especially for a credit or debit card purchase.

*Separate your credit cards into "secure" and "everyday" cards. Typically, one with a higher credit limit should not be used for everyday transactions. Instead, use the secure card to make insurance, car payments, etc.

*Even if the everyday card with a lower credit limit is compromised, it could save you the headache of having to reset all your important monthly payments.

*Get a separate gasoline card instead of using your credit card at gas stations.

*Apartment dwellers especially should consider using a shredder. Throwing torn receipts in the trash chute is an invitation for waiting thieves to retrieve them.

January 20, 2007

TARA PERKINS

BUSINESS REPORTER

An entire industry is flourishing in an effort to help companies and consumers fight the thieves who make a living stealing valuable information like credit card and social insurance numbers.

Shredding, secure document storage, records destruction – it's all big business now.

"Identity theft is becoming more prevalent than the theft of products themselves. The information's worth more," says Scott Hurren, the business development manager at Mississauga-based Accu-Shred Ltd.

"Whenever there's breaches of security, it comes to the forefront, and people start to realize its importance."

This week, two privacy debacles raised new concerns about identity theft.

On Thursday, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce said a computer hard drive with personal information about nearly half a million current and former customers of its Talvest Mutual Funds unit went missing. It's not clear whether the hard drive was lost or stolen, and there is no evidence that the customers' information has been improperly used, the bank said.

The previous day, the American company that owns Canadian retailers Winners and HomeSense revealed that its systems had been hacked and customer information was stolen.

"Things like this tend to help us grow our business," says George Kerns, the chief executive of Fusepoint Managed Services, an information technology company that manages computer infrastructure and related security requirements.

Fusepoint commissioned a poll by Leger Marketing in late 2005 that found more than one in 10 Canadian consumers believed they had already been victims of identity theft.

Fusepoint says its bulletproof Mississauga data centre is "like a fortress" – itself a demonstration that security and privacy are key to combating identity theft.

Accu-Shred's Hurren says clients will, "for extra security, follow a truck with a product on it, cut the seal at our door, watch the shredding being done, and stay here sometimes (for) days to monitor and oversee the destruction."

"If a client wanted us to shred to the size of confetti, we can do that. If they wanted us to shred to the size of a quarter, we could do that. It really depends on how important the destruction of their data is to them."

Accu-Shred specializes in electronic waste. "The only sure way of deleting data from a hard drive is by full process shredding and destruction," the company states.

While all operating systems have some form of delete or erase command, "most of these never touch the actual data that is recorded on the disk drive," the company says. Accu-Shred boasts that it can literally shred hard drives.

Phil Bowden, a market specialist at Oakville-based Securit, said "companies have become more professional about their approach" to document management. "Now, their dealings with us match the policies that they've finally introduced."

Fewer big firms are now allowing employees to decide whether a document should be destroyed or thrown out without a policy in place, he said.

These days, privacy and security experts at most major companies can ramble off the pros of "cross-cut" shredding versus shredding paper into strips.

When Air Canada hired private investigators to collect the trash at a WestJet executive's home, Air Canada sent the paper shreds to ChurchStreet Technology, a U.S. company that reconstructs shredded documents.

That kind of attempt to uncover information would fail if the documents had been shredded by Shred-it, Bowden claims. The company, a division of Securit, has hundreds of trucks roaming in Canada, picking up documents and shredding them right in the truck.

"Ours is a cross-cut shredding process, so it's virtually impossible to reproduce the information," Bowden said.

There are different types of shredders, and people need to ensure they are using the most "robust" machines, said Robin Gould-Soil, the corporate privacy officer at the Toronto Dominion Bank.

TD is today hosting a "community shred event" at four branches in Oakville. The event has been in the works for a few months. "We always recommend that you shred your information," Gould-Soil said.

Both consumers and corporations must share responsibility for safeguarding private data, she said.