



## **NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH NEWS**

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West Valley Senior Lead Office (818) 374-7630  
Sergeant Frank Avila - Sergeant Anna Izzo

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**Log onto [www.lapdonline.org](http://www.lapdonline.org) today! You can view information on crime in your neighborhood; you can get the monthly newsletter and sign up for e-policing, a real-time way to get information from LAPD to you!**

## **NATIONAL NIGHT OUT**



**Tuesday, August 3, 2010 – 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**

Please join the communities of Encino, Reseda, Tarzana and Van Nuys as we celebrate the 27<sup>th</sup> National Night Out at Randal D. Simmons Park, located at the south west corner of Vanowen St. and Wilbur Ave., Reseda (adjacent to the West Valley Area Police Station).

A community event for all to enjoy **FREE** hot dogs, chili dogs, informational booths, kid's zone, balloon makers, face painting, child fingerprinting, bouncers and slides, while learning tips on crime prevention.

National Night Out is a "Community-Police Awareness" countrywide event held every year on the first Tuesday of August. It is meant to increase awareness about police programs in the community, such as drug prevention, Neighborhood Watch and other anti-crime efforts. It brings neighborhoods together with law enforcement and represents the kind of spirit, energy, and determination that help make our neighborhoods safer throughout the year.

The West Valley Area is one of the few divisions in Los Angeles that has received a National Award for the last 5 consecutive years for outstanding community participation at National Night Out.

Please join us as we celebrate another successful event!

**For more information call (818) 376-7636 or visit [www.encinowatch.com](http://www.encinowatch.com)**

## **Reducing Your Chances of Having Your Identity Stolen**

- Reduce the number of credit cards you carry in your wallet or purse.
- When using credit cards or debit cards in restaurants and stores, pay close attention to how the magnetic strip information is swiped by the waiter or clerk. Dishonest employees have been known to use small hand held devices called skimmers to quickly swipe the card and then later download the account number data onto a personal computer. The thief uses the account data for internet shopping and/or creation of counterfeit cards.
- Do not use debit cards when shopping on line. Use a credit card because you are better protected in case of fraud.
- Keep a list or photocopy of all your credit cards, debit cards, bank accounts, and investments – the account numbers, expiration dates and telephone numbers of the customer service and fraud departments – in a secure place (not your wallet or purse) so you can quickly contact these companies in the event your credit cards have been stolen or accounts are being used fraudulently.
- Never give out your social security number, credit card number or any other personal information over the phone, by mail, or on the Internet, unless you have a trusted business relationship with a company and YOU have initiated the call.
- Never permit your credit card number to be written onto your checks. It's a violation of California law (Civil Code section 1725), and puts you at risk for fraud.
- Do not have your social security number or driver's license number printed on your checks. Don't let merchants hand write your social security or driver's license number onto your check because of the risk of fraud.
- Protect your social security number. Release it only when absolutely necessary (like tax forms, employment records, and most banking, stock and property transactions). The SSN is the key to your credit and banking accounts and is the prime target of criminals.
- Use a gel pen for writing checks. Sanford Uni-Ball 207 are pens made to help prevent check fraud, and are available for purchase at most office supply stores. Experts report that gel ink contains tiny particles of color that are trapped in the paper, making check washing more difficult.
- Store personal information securely in your home, especially if you have roommates, employ outside help, or have service work done in your home. Use a locking file cabinet or safe.
- Install a firewall on your home computer to prevent hackers from obtaining personal identifying and financial data from your hard drive. Install and update virus protection software to prevent a worm or virus from causing your computer to send out files or other stored information.
- Before disposing of your computer, remove data by using a strong "wipe" utility program. Do not rely on the "delete" function to remove files containing sensitive information.
- Never respond to "phishing" e-mail messages. These appear to be from your bank, eBay, or PayPal. They instruct you to visit their website, which looks just like the real thing. There you are told to confirm your account information, provide your social security number, date of birth and other personal information. Legitimate financial companies NEVER e-mail their customers with such requests. These messages are the work of fraudsters attempting to obtain personal information in order to commit identity theft.
- Install a locked mailbox at your residence to deter mail theft. When you are away from home for an extended time, have your mail held at the post office, or ask a trusted neighbor to pick it up.
- When you pay bills, do not leave the envelopes containing your checks at your mailbox for the postal carrier to pick up, or in open boxes at the receptionist's desk in your workplace.

### **Further ways to reduce access to your personal information:**

1. Remove your name from the marketing lists of the three credit reporting bureaus – Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. Call (888) 567-8688 or go online to [www.optoutprescreen.com](http://www.optoutprescreen.com). This will limit the number of pre-approved offers of credit that you receive.
2. Sign up for the Federal Trade Commission's National Do Not Call Registry. Your name is added to name deletion lists used by nationwide marketers. Call (888) 382-1222, or [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov)
3. Sign up for Direct Marketing Association's Mail Preference Service. Your name is added to the name deletion lists used by nationwide marketers. Mail Preference Service, P.O. Box 643, Carmel, New York 10512 (include \$1.00 check or money order) or Opt-out on line: <https://www.dmachoice.org/dma/member/regist.action>. A credit card is required for verification only. There is no fee for opting out online.
4. Have your name and address removed from the phone book and reverse directories.

## **ENCINO:**

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Contact Officer Trulik for information on the next Encino Neighborhood Watch Meeting.

## **ATM SCAMS**

Identity theft is often thought of as an electronic crime. In truth, however, it's your everyday habits that could lead to identity theft. Little things that you don't think about can create opportunities that an identity thief needs to grab enough information to damage your credit, or worse, your whole life. Here is an example of how identity thieves can gain access to your personal information and steal your identity.

Protect your Personal Identification Number (PIN)! Have you ever stopped at your ATM machine and had someone stand very close? Beware of those individuals. In this day and age of camera and video-enabled cell phones, the ATM lurker could be recording your ATM pin number! Then it's just a matter of getting hold of your card and they have access to your bank account and all information in it. Also, machines can be tampered with and thieves can duplicate your card. Whenever possible, use a drive thru ATM machine. If you must use an ATM where people can stand behind you, block their view with your body.



## **LAKE BALBOA:**

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## **NIGERIAN SCAMS**

Nigerian letter scams have been around for ages. To create the scam, criminals send out thousands of letters or e-mails that appear to be from a banking or legal official. The letters claim there is a large sum of money that only can be released to a relative of some deceased member of royalty (often a person that was persecuted by the government.) Victims are asked to provide a bank account into which the money can be transferred and promised a large percentage of the money for performing the service. In some cases, victims may also be asked to pay a fee or a series of fees for the release of money. Once the victim has provided account information, the criminals will often drain their bank accounts, and occasionally use that information to open new, fraudulent accounts.

## **RESEDA:**

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**Next Neighborhood Watch Meeting – Summer Potluck starts at 6:00 p.m. Thursday, July 8  
Meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. - L.A.P.D. Community Room**

## **DUMPSTER DIVING**

As the old saying goes, “*One man’s junk is another man’s treasure.*” Dumpster diving is when someone goes through other people’s trash for items that can be used or sold. In most cases dumpster diving means looking for items: used clothing, knick-knacks, CD’s, movies or anything that can be recycled, reused or sold to someone else. People also throw out a lot of paper which is often printed with personal information that includes account numbers, dates of birth, and social security numbers. Once a thief has your trash, it’s just a matter of stealing the valuable information. The criminal takes the information and uses it to create new accounts, funnel money from existing accounts, and will even take over more personal aspects of your life. It’s much easier to do than you can imagine.

The best way to ensure that dumpster diving thieves don’t gather enough information to steal your identity is to shred every piece of paper that you throw away especially mortgage and bank statements, check stubs, pre-approved credit card offers, utility bills, etc. Use a cross cut shredder. Using a straight cut shredder only cuts paper length wise. With enough time and patience, a dumpster diver can put the pieces of your documents back together, much like putting a puzzle together. Protect yourself.... Shred everything. Remember to buy a cross cut shredder!

## **TARZANA:**

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Contact Officer Scoggins for information on the next Tarzana Neighborhood Watch Meeting.

## **PASSWORDS**

Behind every password is personal information that’s worth a fortune to the right buyer. Passwords truly are your keys to your kingdom. Create long passwords, and then keep them safe. Do not carry them in your wallet or in your purse.

Here are a couple of ways to ensure you’ve got the strongest passwords possible :

- Use both letters and numbers; at least 8 of them. Avoid using birth dates, anniversaries, or social security numbers. Also avoid using whole words.
- Don’t use the same password everywhere. Even a strong password is useless if it’s cracked. And if you use the same password on every website that you access, then you are exponentially increasing your risk of identity theft. Instead, create a different password for every site that you access. This also makes it much harder for identity thieves to gain access to large chunks of your personal data.