

CONSUMER CORNER

Preventing Identity Theft

(NAPSA)—One of the best ways to avoid identity theft is to take protective steps before a crime occurs, according to the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC).

Identity theft occurs when someone obtains and uses a person's personal information, such as a Social Security number, to commit credit card fraud or theft. More than 750,000 people fall victim to identity theft annually, each spending an estimated 175 hours of their personal time and more than \$800 to clear their names and restore their credit.



Amidst growing reports about identity theft and the clutter of tips and expensive products designed to stop it, the NCPC recommends a quick, all-in-one solution to avoid becoming a victim.

Developed by BoomerangIt, the McGruff ID Armor Identity Theft Prevention and Privacy Pack includes forms addressed to credit bureaus and direct marketers, useful phone numbers and valuable tips to keep your identity and credit secure. The process takes just 30 minutes, the time necessary to complete and mail a few forms. Once credit agencies receive the forms, an account cannot be opened unless the store or other business calls the consumer directly.

McGruff ID Armor costs about \$10 (an e-mail version is \$8) and can be purchased by visiting www.boomerangit.com or calling 1-800-2BOOMIT. A percentage of sales go to fund NCPC programs.