

## Investigators Say ID Theft Up In Middle Tenn.

Don't Leave ID, Credit Cards In Plain Sight

**WSMV-TV**

updated 7:46 a.m. CT, Sun., March. 1, 2009

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Investigators have said they are seeing more instances of identity theft in the middle Tennessee area and that they are working on combating the problem.

Jeremy Mitchell, a Nashville-area man, was trying to buy a house and found out he had been a victim of identity theft. Someone from Miami had opened new phone and cable accounts worth thousands under his name, investigators said.

"I felt really cheated and, honestly, kind of scared," said Mitchell. "We're in the middle of buying a house right now, and it came up in my credit check.

"As a careful person, getting their identity stolen, it really scared me," Mitchell said, "because I knew that I was always being careful and cautious about who I give my information to."

One way to protect yourself against identity theft, said Metro Police Lt. Mickey Garner, is by not making yourself a victim. They said it is easier for an individual to be victimized when he or she leaves a wallet or purse containing identification and credit cards out in plain sight.

"People are using your identity to open up accounts, and you see that occurring more often," said Garner. "The ones that are not prone to be a thief may do something criminal now because of the economy."

Zander Insurance has helped Mitchell and said identity theft insurance runs about \$72 a year for an individual and \$140 a year for a family.

"I know that if it ever does happen again, I know that I'm covered, and I know that I can move on with my life," said Mitchell.

The U.S. attorney's office has said the stealing of people's credit card numbers is the most common form of identity theft. In the last year, it has brought federal charges against 38 people in more than two dozen identity theft cases locally.

In December, the IRS said that identity theft was becoming such a problem for taxpayers that it had set up a specialized unit in October just to deal with it. *Reporter Regina Raccuglia contributed to this story.*

URL: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/29431659/>