

MEMO

To: Vice Chancellor Lauren Brisky and
Vice Chancellor Harry Jacobson

From: Andy Richter, USAC President 2005-2006, and
Lisa Ellis, MCSAC President 2005-2006

Date: June 16, 2006

The University Staff Advisory Council and the Medical Center Staff Advisory Council jointly submit the attached identity protection and management recommendation. After considering our recommendation, please notify each Staff Council of your decision.

Signed,

_____ Date _____
Andy Richter
University Staff Advisory Council President, 2005-2006

_____ Date _____
Lisa Ellis
Medical Center Staff Advisory Council President, 2005-2006

**University Staff
Advisory Council**

and

**Medical Center Staff
Advisory Council**

**Identity Protection and
Management**

Joint

Recommendation

Recommendations

The University Staff Advisory and Medical Center Staff Advisory Councils jointly make two recommendations.

1) The use of Social Security numbers as personal identifiers should be limited to those areas of the University where Social Security numbers are absolutely necessary. Vanderbilt should assign a different identifier for all other needs. The employee ID number is one possibility. When Social Security numbers are used, all members of the Vanderbilt community are vulnerable.

2) Personal identity protection and management guidelines should be embedded in our existing operations to raise awareness and educate the members of the Vanderbilt community. It may be appropriate to consider the creation of a task force to examine this issue in more depth and to develop action plans which are consistent with Vanderbilt policies, practices, and financial resources.

Background

Personal identity theft is a crime in which an imposter obtains key pieces of information, such as Social Security, state driver's license, or credit card numbers, and usually uses them to commit fraud. Another aspect of this problem is the impact it has on the victim. Identity protection is a term that describes people taking action to protect their personal information from being stolen and potentially misused or abused.

The most common approaches to personal information theft are:

1. family and friends
2. Internet hacking
3. postal mail

Victims of identity theft may experience some or all of the following:

- unexpected charges on credit card bills
- mail forwarded to another address
- new phone services established in their name
- car loans taken out in their name
- bankruptcy proceedings files under their names

Some criminal rings have even sold large quantities of stolen identities on the world wide web.

Many corporations, government agencies, and universities have acknowledged this growing problem and are taking steps to address it. Examples include:

Better Business Bureau
Federal Trade Commission
Department of Justice
Social Security Administration
Northwestern University
University of Michigan
University of Texas
MasterCard
VISA

The United States Congress is considering imposing restrictions on the use of Social Security Numbers as identifiers. As of May 19, 2006, there are currently 550 bills from the 109th Congress related to identity protection of some sort according to "The Library of Congress - Thomas" website.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, identity theft cost business \$52.6 billion dollars in 2004. According to the Identify Theft Resource Center, the average for fraudulent charges per stolen identity was \$90,000 in 2003. And victims now spend, on average, 600 hours cleaning up the mess after each identity theft.

Vanderbilt University has its own police force to provide an extra level of protection to its community. This joint recommendation calls upon Vanderbilt University to make every effort to protect its community from identity theft. It is imperative that Vanderbilt University does not open itself to any unnecessary liability due to the misuse of Social Security numbers.

Vanderbilt University's unnecessary utilization of employee Social Security numbers can be observed in the partial list that follows.

Campus-wide areas

Commodore Card
VUNet accounts
Time sheets (contain both the employee ID number and a portion of the SSN)
Library access system
Vanderbilt Pharmacy
Travel report forms
Vanderbilt Credit Union
Student Records
Check Request forms
Benefits inquiries
Tuition Assistance forms
Procurement Card

VUMC-specific areas

Patient records
ID Badges (encoded in magnetic strip, SSN displayed on screens)
Restricted areas allow SSN as entrance code

Continuing Medical Education

Meeting sign-up sheets
Patient sign-in sheets
Customer Service

References

These websites were used as references in composing this recommendation.

<http://nexus.realtimerepublishers.com/DGITP.htm>
<http://cwflyris.computerworld.com/t/524740/231553/19372/0/>
<http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/fraud/idtheft.html>
<http://www.bbbonline.org/IDtheft/>
<http://www.identitytheft.org/>
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/idtheft.htm>
<http://www.fightidentitytheft.com/>
<http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/idtheft.htm>
[http://cu.convio.net/id theft Congress CR](http://cu.convio.net/id%20theft%20Congress%20CR)
<http://www.educause.edu/imsp>
<http://thomas.loc.gov/>