

HOW A MAIL THIEF OPERATES

Who are the thieves?

A mail thief is someone who sees the potential for easy money in stealing mail. This can be an individual, but more problematic are organized groups that descend upon neighborhoods such as Montclair, sometimes from great distances such as Phoenix, San Diego, Los Angeles or Sacramento. These groups know that the money in Montclair will make it worth the trip, that the distance will make them harder to track, and that until now there has been no organized mail theft prevention effort in Montclair.

Not all thieves are from afar; a past case involved a Hills neighbor preying on mailboxes within a short distance of his home.

What are thieves looking for?

Mail thieves sift through incoming and outgoing mail, looking for:

- Identifying numbers, such as Social Security Number (SSN), bank account number, medical account identification numbers
- Passwords: Banking account online access password, computer passwords
- Names: Mother's maiden name, all residents
- Mailing addresses
- Personal checks you have written to pay bills—they will alter the checks and cash them money
- Credit cards - while they hope to find already activated cards, they are usually successful in using the 800# to activate a new card and use if it for personal gain

It is common practice in identity theft cases for thieves to submit false changes of address orders to the Postal Service. They will also call the victim's known financial institutions to redirect mail for fraud purposes.

What do mail thieves do with stolen information?

Mail thieves can chemically alter checks, create databases with information about you and your family, use your credit cards to purchase goods, and apply for credit in your good name.

Most mail thieves are intelligent; they understand mail, computers, how to gather information, how to assemble and relate information into a searchable database, and of course, how to use it for personal gain. One local mail thief gathered hundreds of thousands of dollars in a few months, bought computers, and kept a database on each resident he robbed, which accounts he utilized, and which were still to be hit.