



# Fraud Newsletter

January 2008

*Sheriff Steve Mansfield*

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*"If it's too good to be true  
it normally is"*

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## **Fraud and ID Theft Information – To Better Protect the Residents of Lewis County**

**Fraud is simply a theft by trick. It can take the form of chain letters claiming huge amounts of cash to those who send money in or people claiming they will provide a service and never do.**

**Identity theft and identity fraud are terms used to refer to all types of crimes in which someone wrongfully obtains and uses another person's personal data in a way that involves fraud or deception for economic gain. This newsletter is intended to keep the public informed of the most recent fraud schemes happening in our county. It will also provide resources to help you take precautions to protect yourself from these vicious crimes.**

### **PROTECT YOUR ID**

- 1** Always know who you are providing personal information to
- 2** If you use passwords to access accounts make sure to change them often
- 3** Never provide personal information in response to any unsolicited offer
- 4** Know the company you are dealing with when making online purchases

## **Current Scams and Frauds Hitting Lewis County**

### **Flood Related Scams**

**This is not one specific crime, but a general warning concerning crimes of this type. We have seen way too many people become victims of thieves who prey on those impacted by the flood. We have also seen thieves taking advantage of those willing to give time, money, and supplies to help our community recover. These criminals will use any means available to steal from those our community is attempting to help. If you feel you have been a victim, or know someone that has, please report it to the Lewis County Sheriff's Office. We are committed to track these criminals down and hold them accountable to our criminal justice system.**

### Be Aware of Construction Scams and Frauds

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*"Internet fraud is the fastest growing crime in the US"*

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The residents of Lewis County have just gone through a period of extreme weather leading to flooding in many parts of the county. These natural disasters are a prime hunting ground for thieves and scam artists. If you have had property damaged during the flood and are attempting to have repairs made, please make sure you know the contractors who are doing the work. Here is a short list of things you should do to help protect yourself:

1. Always check references of a contractor before work is started.
2. Always be leery of contractors demanding full payment before work begins.
3. Check to make sure the contractor is licensed to do the work he intends to do.
4. Always obtain an estimate before agreeing to any construction work.
5. Be leery of estimates that are substantially lower than others you have obtained for the same work.

### Construction Fraud Information

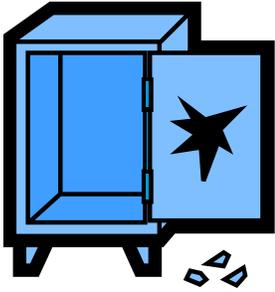
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*"Vigilance is the only real protection against Internet fraud"*

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Below are some sources to check when considering a contractor:

1. To check a contractor's registration with Labor and Industries, go to "contractors.lni.wa.gov" or call 1-800-647-0982.
2. Report fraud to the Attorney General's Office by filing a complaint online at "atg.wa.gov" or call 1-800-551-4636.
3. Report an unregistered contractor to Labor and Industries by calling the agency's fraud hotline at 1-888-811-5974 or online at "contractors.lni.wa.gov".



**The internet is a powerful tool used by both legitimate businesses and scam artists alike. Always take steps to protect yourself and your personal information as you would protect your home or car.**

### Who should I notify about a fraud or scam attempt?

- Federal Trade Commission toll free hotline: 877-FTC-HELP (877-382-4357)
- Federal Trade Commission on-line complaint form ([www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov))
- Internet Fraud Complaint Center ([www.ic3.gov/](http://www.ic3.gov/))
- Lewis County Sheriff's Office – 360-740-1329

### Other Resources

Phone Busters (Canadian Link) - <http://www.phonebusters.com/>

The Federal Citizen Information Center - <http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/scamsdesc.htm>

The Federal Trade Commission - <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>

The FBI Fraud Information page - <http://www.fbi.gov/majcases/fraud/fraudschemes.htm>

### Lewis County Sheriff's Office Mission Statement

To make a positive difference for members of our community by seeking and finding ways to affirmatively promote, preserve and deliver a feeling of security, safety and quality service.



*Sheriff Steven Mansfield  
Committed to make a difference.*