

Richmond Launches Identity Theft Campaign

As a follow-up to the highly successful Operation Reconcile, the Metro-Richmond Identity Theft Task Force is launching a new identity theft public awareness campaign.

Established in fall 2004 to combat identity theft in Virginia's Richmond metropolitan area, the Metro-Richmond Identity Theft Task Force has been repeatedly praised and commended as a superior example of law enforcement collaboration.

"Thanks to our partnership with the Metro-Richmond Identity Theft Task Force, more than 50 perpetrators of identity theft were indicted and will be brought to justice," said Virginia Attorney General Bob McDonnell. "Identity theft is the fastest-growing white-collar crime in the nation. As we bring relief to the victims of the indicted individuals, our office will continue to work with our partners in the Metro-Richmond Identity Theft Task Force to pursue identity thieves."

In the aftermath of these arrests the task force is launching the new "Think Before You Do IT" campaign to raise public awareness about the severe penalties now in store for perpetrators of identity theft. Under new federal law, any aggravated identity theft offense carries a mandatory 24-month prison term that must run consecutive to any other prison sentence. It is the only federal fraud offense requiring mandatory prison time.

The Postal Inspection Service, which houses task force operations, is sponsoring the awareness campaign in conjunction with other federal agencies. The campaign will display banners on the sides and interiors of Richmond



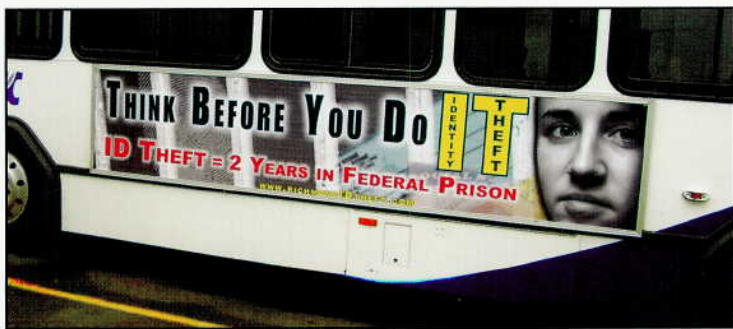
Task force leader Dave McGinnis (left) accepts an award from Chuck Rosenberg, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Metro buses and will feature the task force website — www.richmondIDtheft.com — which provides information about identity theft and resources for victims of the crime.

Postal Inspector-in-Charge Guy Cottrell praised the professionalism and level of cooperation among the task force's 15 agencies.

"The Metro-Richmond Identity Theft Task Force is a fine example of what can be achieved when the law enforcement community comes together to address a specific problem in the community," said Cottrell. "The member agencies of the task force are dedicated to fighting identity crime and will continue to vigorously protect the good names and identities of the citizens of metropolitan Richmond."

Identity theft awareness advertisements will be displayed on the interior and exterior (shown here) of Richmond Metro buses.



USPIS Improves Safety of Inmate Mail

With the prominent publication of a chapter in one of the nation's top prison manuals, the Postal Inspection Service recently made significant progress toward preventing prisoners from sending dangerous and threatening mail from correctional facilities.

"Outgoing inmate mail causes tremendous problems. Since 2001, inmates have really exploited the public's fear of powders in the mail. Prisoners have managed to prompt evacuations of entire buildings by mailing materials as simple as soap powder, and others have even mailed explosive devices," said Postal Inspector Tripp Brinkley, who served as the chapter's lead writer and editor.

The book *Guidelines for the Development of a Security Program* is a premiere industry handbook for prison safety and management. Earlier editions of the book covered mail security in only two paragraphs. Previous content did not address outgoing mail and focused exclusively on the smuggling of contraband into prisons.

The offer to include a chapter on mail center security resulted from an earlier dialogue with the American Correctional Association on how to reduce the number of inmates sending powder in the mail.

"This is an excellent example of how the Postal Inspection Service works to improve the safety and security of the U.S. Mail," said Chief Postal Inspector Alexander Lazaroff. "In this case, a conference presentation given by a Postal Inspector on prison mail issues led to discussions for a magazine article, which culminated in a mail safety guide issued specifically for that industry."

"The Postal Inspection Service values its relationship with all customers and constantly strives to forge partnerships that allow for a more secure Postal Service," added Lazaroff.