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Hardin County, Kentucky

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## News

### 'Skimming' is latest in line of credit card scams

By FORREST BERKSHIRE

Hardin County is not immune to identity theft, law enforcement officials say.

With technology becoming more advanced and cheaper, law enforcement officials say it is spreading, with such scams as stealing credit card numbers right from under the owner's nose and printing off their own checks.

"Skimming" is one scam that worries Dave Evangelista, executive director and founder of the U.S. Internet Crime Task Force, Inc.

"I don't know specifically where it is going on, but it is occurring," said Evangelista, who is also a Vine Grove police officer.

The way skimming works is a store employee swipes a credit or debit card on a small portable card reader, which captures and stores the information contained on the card. Although the scam has been used nationwide in a variety of businesses, officials say it most often occurs in restaurants where servers routinely carry cards out of sight to pay the bill.

Evangelista advises consumers to use common sense when they're at the point of sale.

Dennis Williams, a U.S. Secret Service agent in the Louisville field office, said there have been cases of skimming in the Louisville and surrounding areas, but it is not widespread.

"Is it a big problem, no," he said. "Is it a trend, no."

"Yes, this stuff does exist, but it's not a major problem," he said. "There have been isolated incidents."

Still, he also advised that people watch who gets access to their credit cards. He also said if a person finds unfamiliar purchases on their statements, they should notify the police and the three main credit rating agencies, TransUnion, Equifax and Experian.

A more common type of scam locally is printing counterfeit checks with victims' routing information gleaned from their real checks, said Elizabethtown Police Detective Pete Chytla.

Chytla said high quality printers have become cheaper and more common, and some criminals have used them to print off checks ripping off people and companies for tens of thousands of dollars.

"They're basically printing off checks that don't exist," he said. "It's getting to the point where a lot of places don't want to accept checks."

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Chytla said counter-feiting is increasing lo-cally, placing a burden on local detective agencies.

"This year we've seen quite a few counterfeits," he said. "There's a definite increase. We're overwhelmed with fraud."

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