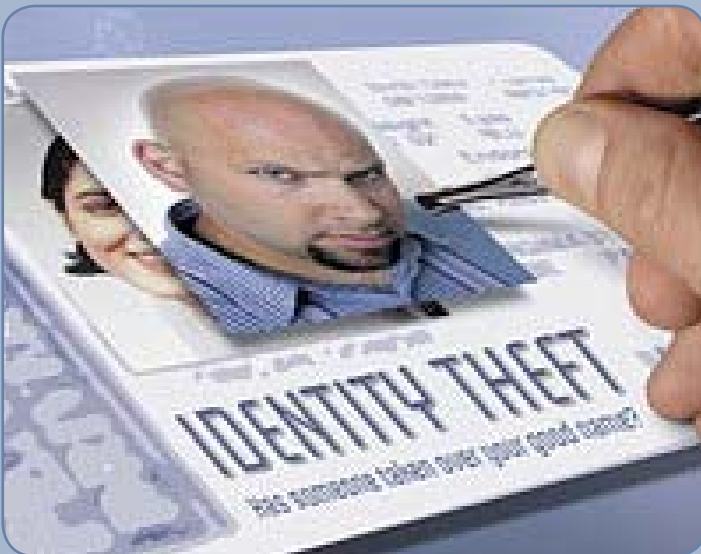


Brits complacent about IDENTITY THEFT



Britons are failing to protect themselves against identity theft, a credit reference agency has warned.

A third of Britons are still throwing away personal documents such as bank statements and receipts without shredding them, said Callcredit, citing new figures obtained from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

The figures also revealed that a quarter of people do not check their statements on a regular basis, while four out of five have never obtained a copy of their credit reference file.

Melanie Mitchley, director of industry relations at Callcredit, said that people were still not protecting themselves, even though they know how to do so.

"Personal data is the lifeblood of identity thieves and they are gorging themselves on people's complacency," she warned.

"People are underestimating the heartache," she continued. "It can take many hours work over several weeks, even months, for someone to recover control of their identity and sort out their credit file."

Individuals and businesses are advised to be vigilant and shred any documents containing sensitive information, including utility bills.

It is also important to regularly check your credit report and install up-to-date antivirus software and a firewall on all computers.