



# FRAUD ALERT

FROM THE OFFICE OF LEE COUNTY SHERIFF MIKE SCOTT

## Are You 1 of a 110 Million?

In the past 12 months, we've all become familiar with terms such as "hacker" and "data breach"; as local, state, and national media report on intrusions into data bases of large national retail organizations. With more than 100,000 known viruses and more appearing virtually every day, it's important for you to know how to protect yourself from "hackers".

"Hacker" is a term used by some to mean "a clever programmer" and by others, especially those in popular media, to mean "someone who tries to break into computer systems to gain access to another's personal information." According to Ponemon Institute, a data-collection research firm, about 432 million online accounts belonging to 110 million Americans were hacked in cyber attacks during the past year.

As consumers grow weary of the seemingly nonstop parade of high-profile hacking of customer records, Sheriff Mike Scott encourages you to remain vigilant about protecting your online privacy by practicing these tips:

- **Protect your technology.** Use strong/different passwords on your online accounts and electronic devices, (including your smartphone) and change these frequently. Don't forget to check for updates on security software just in case not all are automatic.
- **Be skeptical.** Emails beginning with "Dear Customer" are most often bogus so do NOT click on their links. Don't trust emails that ask you to confirm recent transactions, order confirmations, delivery tracking, etc. Also beware of "warnings" from your bank asking you to confirm your account; instead look up the phone number yourself if you are concerned.
- **Be a smart shopper.** When using your smartphone to shop, use retailers' dedicated apps, rather than your phone's browser. Never use a debit card to shop online, or conduct financial transactions on public Wi-Fi networks.
- **Monitor your financial life.** Check your accounts weekly for quick indicators of fraud and access your right to a free credit report every four months at [www.AnnualCreditReport.com](http://www.AnnualCreditReport.com).

For more information or to report a fraud or scam, call the Sheriff's Office Fraud Line at 258-3292.