



MIKE FEUER
L.A. City Attorney



PRESS RELEASE

Office of the City Attorney
213-978-8340
@CityAttorneyLA

For Immediate Release
Contact: Frank Mateljan
213-978-8340 o
213-479-5675 c

August 18, 2015

CITY ATTORNEY MIKE FEUER LAUNCHES PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN AS PART OF CONTINUED CRACKDOWN ON IDENTITY THEFT

LOS ANGELES – In the wake of an increase in identity theft cases, City Attorney Mike Feuer today detailed his office’s efforts to crack down on the rampant problem of identity theft across the City including the launch of a public awareness campaign and the allocation of additional resources to prosecute identity theft cases.

“Identity theft continues to take a devastating financial toll on so many unsuspecting individuals each year,” said Feuer. “My office will continue to take decisive action against perpetrators of identity theft and will empower residents with the information they need to avoid being victims.”

Joined by representatives of the LAPD Commercial Crimes Division, City Attorney Feuer rolled out a new program advising the public on simple ways to protect personal identifying information in order to avoid becoming a victim of identity theft. Tips include: shredding all financial or personal information, don’t respond to solicitation for sensitive information, don’t use debit cards, locking your mailbox and not keeping your driver’s license or registration in your automobile.

Additional tips can be found: <http://www.lacityattorney.org/#!/resources-and-tips/c74z>

City Attorney Feuer has also dedicated additional resources within his office to review and prosecute suspected cases of identity theft including assigning a full-time prosecutor in both the San Fernando Valley and Metro Los Angeles as the main point of contact with LAPD.

The LAPD currently investigates 20 different types of identity theft including government documents or benefits fraud, credit card fraud, phone or utilities fraud, bank fraud, loan fraud and other types of identity fraud. Since January 2015, the City Attorney’s Office has reviewed 482 identity theft-related case resulting in the filing of 375 cases. In 2014 the office reviewed 406 cases resulting in the filing of 254 criminal cases.

-more-

Recent cases include:

- *People v. Yesenia Vargas 5PY04022, People v. Froilan Franco, 5PY03999, People v. Carlos Fernandez, 5PY04027*

Defendant Yesenia Vargas allegedly walked into a Wells Fargo Bank in Northridge and attempted to cash a check using the identification of another person. When the teller noticed the signatures did not match she contacted the account holder who advised that the check originally had been made out to a creditor for an amount \$1,000 less than the amount on the check that was presented. Vargas allegedly left the bank where she and her companions, Defendants Fernandez and Franco were allegedly contacted. A search of the vehicle allegedly found over 50 pieces of personal identifying information including checks, DMV records, bank statements, medical information, insurance cards, and banking information. Defendant Fernandez is charged with five counts of Identity theft; Defendant Franco is charged with two counts of identity theft, and Defendant Vargas is charged with three counts of identity theft and one count of possessing a forged check. Arrests warrants have been filed for each defendant.

- *People v. Lisa Travino, 5CA09839*

Defendant Travino allegedly made an online reservation at a luxury apartment with fraudulent credit cards. Upon arrival, police were called and she allegedly presented a California driver's license under the same name as the fraudulent cards. The driver's came back as belonging to a different person. The defendant is charged with identity theft, false impersonation, possession of a counterfeit driver's license. The defendant failed to appear at her arraignment and an arrest warrant is outstanding for her.

- *People v. Mauricio Cruz-Martinez*

Defendant Cruz-Martinez allegedly cashed a forged check for \$400 at a check cashing business. Defendant allegedly returned later that day to attempt to cash an additional check from a different payer. The check cashing owner allegedly confirmed that both accounts were in fact closed and contacted the police. The defendant was allegedly in possession of two other forged checks from the suspected account all made out to the defendant totaling approximately \$5,000. Police contacted both account holders and they both stated the checks related to the alleged incident were attached to accounts that had been closed for five and seven years respectively. Defendant is charged with 14 counts of forgery and identity theft. Pretrial is set for August 18 in Department 53.