



News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

Statements of Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, and John P. Melville, New York State Police Acting Superintendent, on the Theft of Personal Information in Upstate New York

Statement of Commissioner Astrue:

I learned earlier this week about the arrest of an individual alleged to have illegally downloaded personal information of about 15,000 people from computers belonging to private contractors working for the New York state agency that decides some initial disability claims for Social Security. This individual is in custody, and we continue to work with law enforcement to determine exactly what information was downloaded and the risk to the persons involved.

Thanks to the quick and skillful response of the New York State Police, it appears that illegal use of the downloaded information only occurred in a limited number of cases; however, the investigations are ongoing and we do not know the extent of the damage. As soon as we identify the individuals whose information was compromised, we will notify them, offer them free credit monitoring, and provide them with a special toll-free telephone number to call for assistance.

I asked Social Security's Inspector General to undertake an investigation and audit, and to work closely with the New York State Police. I appreciate the continued cooperation of the State of New York and will ask the appropriate authorities to prosecute every responsible individual.

Statement of New York State Police Acting Superintendent John P. Melville:

In addition to the insecurity brought directly upon victims, identity theft and computer crimes cost consumers, corporations and government millions of dollars every year. The New York State Police will employ all its expertise and financial and computer crimes resources to investigate and bring to justice anyone who engages in the fraudulent use of stolen personal information.

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