

# News Release



## County of San Diego Methamphetamine Strike Force

### Officials see little-known law as key tool in fight against meth-fueled identity thefts

#### Residents urged to report violations to protect customers' private information, promote business compliance

**Who** County Supervisors Dianne Jacob and Greg Cox, District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis and the San Diego County Methamphetamine Strike Force.

**What** Officials are warning consumers and businesses that a little-known state law -- which requires merchants truncate (or replacing the numbers with a neutral symbol.) credit and debit card numbers on customer receipts -- is often not followed by merchants who may be unaware of the requirement. Failure to follow this law puts customers at great risk to identity thieves, who use receipts as easy sources of illicit income or who trade consumer data directly for methamphetamine.

Current state law specifically requires the receipt to have only the last five digits of a credit / debit card identified with the rest of the numbers typically replaced by asterisks or X's. Ideally, both store and customer receipts would be truncated, though currently the law only requires it for a customer's receipt.

The law, originally passed in 2001 with a three year period to ease into compliance, states that "no person, firm, partnership, association, corporation, or limited liability company that accepts credit or debit cards for the transaction of business shall print more than the last five digits of the credit or debit card account number or the expiration date upon any receipt provided to the cardholder."

The law applies only to receipts that are electronically printed -- not to transactions in which the sole means of recording the person's credit or debit card number is by handwriting or by an imprint or copy of the credit or debit card.

#### **CONSUMER ACTION NEEDED**

The Meth Strike Force is urging residents to pay closer attention to all paperwork associated with credit and debit card transactions and to report any violations of this critical law that can help drastically reduce identity theft.

- Call the Meth Strike Force Hotline at 1-877-No 2 meth or go online to our Web site at [www.no2meth.org](http://www.no2meth.org) to report truncation problems.

**Where** Throughout San Diego County

**Why** It's critical that businesses do everything they can to protect their customers from the threats posed by identity thefts.

The growing connection between methamphetamine and identity theft poses a clear danger to both the public and the business community.

In the last three years, cases involving methamphetamine and identity theft have jumped 35 percent, according to the San Diego County District Attorney's Office.

An informal survey of District Attorney investigators and law enforcement officers indicates that at least 75 percent of suspects in local I.D. theft cases showed evidence of methamphetamine abuse.

*Note: These figures are considered low. In many identity theft, fraud and forgery cases, the evidence of meth influence doesn't rise to the level of a chargeable offense, according to prosecutors.*

**Goals** To address this issue, the San Diego County Methamphetamine Strike Force intends to:

- Increase public awareness of harm associated with meth use;
- Promote legal, policy and management tools for business that have high volume of customer credit card paperwork;
- Increase standardized reporting of cases related to both methamphetamine and identity theft.

**Note** More information about Identity Theft is also available from the San Diego Based Identity Theft Resource Center at [www.idtheftcenter.org](http://www.idtheftcenter.org).



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**CONTACT**

Jeff Stinchcomb  
Media Communications Manager  
Institute for Public Strategies  
(619) 296-3311 ext. 29  
(619) 301-3592 (cell)