

Electronic Recyclers International CEO Warns "Nobody is Safe" from Identity Theft

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Citing a recent breach of security at Citigroup that caused hundreds of thousands of cardholders' private information to be compromised, John Shegerian, Chairman and CEO of Electronic Recyclers International (ERI), the nation's leading recycler of electronic waste, has issued a public statement warning businesses and private citizens to take extra precautions to protect their private digital data and records in this age of identity theft.

Citigroup, the third largest bank in the United States, announced last week that the names, addresses, card account numbers, and emails of about 200,000 bankcard holders had been exposed when computer hackers accessed Citigroup's network. The bank discovered the cyber-attack last month.

The bank is now part of a large and growing group of companies experiencing data breaches in 2011, including Sony, Epsilon, Google, the State of Texas, the New York Yankees, and Michael's Stores. In total, more than 114 million records have been exposed in the first half of this year -- that's nearly four times the number of records breached in all of 2010.

The breach experienced by Citibank has initiated action by banking regulators to develop and adopt new regulations to enhance security. The Chairman of the FDIC, Sheila Bair, last week suggested the FDIC may ask some banks to strengthen their authentication when a customer logs into an online account.

Shegerian applauded the FDIC's actions but warns that it is only one layer of protection against identity thieves. He stressed that in an age where virtually everyone has private or personal information on their computers, it is critical for our government, businesses and individuals to protect themselves by simply not throwing their computer data in the trash.

"With current technological innovations there is very fast turnover these days when it comes to business and private computers, laptops, cell phones, and other consumer electronic devices," said Shegerian. "With hundreds of thousands of unwanted consumer electronic devices going unwanted, proper destruction of private digital data has become a significantly important issue that needs to be addressed by all governmental, corporate and US citizens.

"If data from the hard drives of disposed consumer electronic devices is not properly shredded and destroyed, personal information will continue to be breached by identity thieves and our Homeland and National Security can even be put in senseless jeopardy," he added. "At ERI, we know how important this is and have developed the world's most efficient shredding technology for the destruction and recycling of e-waste. Citigroup's current troubles with cyber-thieves serve as yet another powerful example of why the appropriate disposition of electronic waste needs to be addressed now on a national level."

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