



# Federal Trade Commission News

Office of Public Affairs -Press Release

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600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW • Washington, D.C. 20580 • 202-326-2180 • opa@ftc.gov

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## **FTC Issues Annual List of Top Consumer Complaints**

### *Identity Theft Complaints Again Top the List in Hawaii*

The Federal Trade Commission today issued its annual report, “Consumer Fraud and Identity Theft Complaint Data” on complaints consumers have filed with the agency. For the seventh year in a row, identity theft tops the list, accounting for 36 percent of the 674,354 complaints received between January 1 and December 31, 2006. Other categories near the top of the complaint list include shop-at-home/catalog sales; prizes, sweepstakes and lotteries; Internet services and computer complaints; and Internet auction fraud.

“Consumers’ help in stopping unlawful operations is critical,” said Deborah Platt Majoras, Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission. “By filing a complaint with the FTC, consumers are making information available to more than 1,600 law enforcement agencies that have access to our secure database.”

“It’s as easy as a click or a call,” she said. “The FTC has an online complaint form at [FTC.gov](http://www.ftc.gov), or consumers can reach us at 1-877-FTC-HELP.”

This year brought some firsts. For the first time, complaint data has been broken out by metropolitan statistical areas with populations greater than 100,000. Breakout data for more than 350 metropolitan areas can be found at <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2007/02/topcomplaints.htm>. In Hawaii, data is available for Hilo, Honolulu, and Kahului-Wailuku. And this year, complaint data has been sorted into 16 categories. They are:

Rank	Top Categories	Complaints	%
1	Identity Theft	246,035	36%
2	Shop-at-Home/Catalog Sales	46,995	7%
3	Prizes/Sweepstakes and Lotteries	45,587	7%
4	Internet Services and Computer Complaints	41,243	6%
5	Internet Auctions	32,832	5%

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(consumer complaints–2/7/07)

6	Foreign Money Offers	20,411	3%
7	Advance-Fee Loans and Credit Protection/Repair	10,857	2%
8	Magazines and Buyers Clubs	8,924	1%
9	Telephone Services	8,165	1%
10	Health Care	7,467	1%
11	Business Opportunities and Work-at-Home Plans	7,460	1%
12	Travel, Vacations, and Timeshare	6,712	1%
13	Office Supplies and Services	5,723	1%
14	Grants: Scholarships/Educational & Non-Educational	5,310	1%
15	Employment Agencies/Job Counselors/Overseas Work	4,485	1%
16	Investments	3,630	1%
	Other Coded Complaints	12,399	2%

This year, one major data contributor changed the way in which it codes complaints, and did not code many of its complaints, so comparisons with previous years' complaint categories are difficult.

The FTC received 2,020 fraud complaints and 615 identity theft complaints from Hawaii consumers in 2006. Hawaii ranked 39<sup>th</sup> in the nation in identity theft complaints per 100,000 people.

The top five fraud complaints for Hawaii were:

1	Shop-at-Home/Catalog Sales	292	14%
2	Internet Auctions	224	11%
3	Internet Services and Computer Complaints	207	10%
4	Prizes/Sweepstakes and Lotteries	198	10%
5	Foreign Money Offers	111	5%

Other findings from the report include:

- Consumers reported fraud losses totaling more than \$1.1 billion; the median monetary loss was \$500. Eighty-five percent of the consumers reporting fraud also reported an amount lost.
- The percentage of fraud complaints with wire transfer as the reported payment method continues to increase. Twenty-three percent of the consumers reported wire transfer as the payment method, an increase of eight percentage points from calendar year 2005.
- Credit card fraud (25 percent) was the most common form of reported identity theft, followed by phone or utilities fraud (16 percent), bank fraud (16 percent), and employment fraud (14 percent).

Audio files available to download are linked to this press release on the FTC's Web site, <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2007/02/topcomplaints.htm>. These MP3 files, to support news stories on radio and television, include quotes in both English and Spanish on the overall announcement, as well as advice on what consumers can do to avoid fraud.

(consumer complaints-2/07/07)

**Copies of the report, Consumer Fraud and Identity Theft Complaint Data - January-December 2006 are available from the FTC's Web site at <http://www.consumer.gov/sentinel> and also from the FTC's Consumer Response Center, Room 130, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20580. The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint in English or Spanish or to get free information on any of 150 consumer topics, call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877- 382-4357), or use the complaint form at <http://www.ftc.gov/ftc/complaint.htm>. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft, and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to more than 1,600 civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.**

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**MEDIA CONTACT: Claudia Bourne Farrell or Jacqueline Dizdul  
Office of Public Affairs  
202-326-2180**

(topcomplaints)