

Identity Crisis! What to do when your life is in someone else's hands

Scores of South Africans woke up to a disturbing reality this week when the British High Commission contacted them to say that their UK Visa Applications together with all supporting documentation were stolen, when the courier van transporting these documents to the airport was hijacked.

While these people must deal with the inconvenience of applying for new passports, there's a far more sinister issue at play. When applying for a Visa people are required to include original copies of their most personal documentation. From marriage certificates, to bank statements and even their home addresses. A terrifying prospect indeed. In the wrong hands this type of information could create complete chaos for those people affected.

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the world today, one that has given rise to hundreds of criminal syndicates who know exactly how to use your own personal information for their financial gain. This could include hacking into your bank accounts, running up thousands of rands in credit to your name, selling your identity to others, even faking your marriage to an illegal foreigner – and all this combined with access to your home address.

While it's unclear whether these hijackers were specifically targeting the High Commission's documents, or if they were aware of other high value items in the vehicle is not yet known, but forewarned is forearmed, and there are some proactive steps that people can take to protect themselves in this case:

- Monitor your personal information like a hawk, keeping a close eye on all banking and card activity.
- File a police report and notify your banks to the fact that your identity has been compromised.
- Close any and all accounts that you believe have been tampered with, and change all of your passwords immediately.
- Place a fraud alert with your creditors.
- Notify Home Affairs about your missing passport.
- Finally, take ownership of your identity. ThisIsMe has launched a service that enables you register on its system, which is directly linked to the Department of Home Affairs National Identification system (HANIS).

- In future banks, financial services providers and identity verification agencies can accurately and positively identify you as a prospective client if you are registered on this system.

Identity theft has unfortunately become a terrifying reality and it can take years to repair your financial reputation, should your information somehow land in the wrong hands. Don't hesitate to take those proactive steps to protect yourself against this type of crime. It's never too late to take control of the situation.

ENDS

.....
.....

About the Authors

Jenny Reid is the CEO iFacts and Mark Chirnside is the CEO of ThisIsMe.

iFacts, a people screening and HR services provider has recently partnered with ThisIsMe, South Africa's first online ID verification.

ThisIsMe provides a verification service with the aim of removing the complication from compliance. It offers a service to merchants and organisations who wish to positively verify the identification of customers, suppliers and employees, in PoPi Compliant manner. Secondly it provides a secure service to proactive individuals who wish to have their own identification positively verified as well.

About iFacts:

iFacts removes the people risk so that organisations can go about their business with employees they can trust. iFacts has a range of services that extend into every aspect of proactive and reactive security activity, which a company requires for optimum employee performance, loyalty and integrity. From people risk, ethics and integrity to safety and security and employee wellness, iFacts offers a full range of services to both individuals and employees that will ensure your organisation is achieving optimum performance.

Issued by Write Scene on behalf of iFacts

For Editorial Enquiries, contact:

Andrea Badenhorst

Write Scene

Tel: 011 678 5647

Mobile: 076 811 0233

Email: andrea@writescene.co.za

www.writescene.co.za

For Further information about iFacts, contact:

Jenny Reid

iFacts CEO

Tel: 011 609 5124

Mobile: 082 600 8225

Email: jenny@ifacts.co.za

www.ifacts.co.za