

Wednesday, May 18, 2011

Abigail Lootens/Erika Leyva, Department of Consumer Affairs, (212) 487-4283

## **CITY TO HOLD 4TH ANNUAL FREE SHRED FEST MAY 22ND TO HELP NEW YORKERS PROTECT THEIR IDENTITIES**

### ***First Four Participants at Each of 16 Locations Will Receive Free Personal Shredders***

The Department of Consumer Affairs Commissioner Jonathan Mintz, the Mayor's Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator and Chief Advisor to the Mayor for Policy and Strategic Planning John Feinblatt, Council Member and Consumer Affairs Committee Chair Daniel Garodnick and representatives from the Municipal Credit Union, Staples and shredding companies today announced that the City's 4th annual **Shred Fest**, a free paper-shredding event to increase public awareness of identity theft prevention, will be held **Sunday, May 22 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.** New Yorkers can shred personal documents for free at 16 locations throughout the five boroughs. Complimentary personal paper shredders, donated by Staples®, will be given to the first four people\* to arrive at each location. Documents will be shredded in industrial shredders mounted with TV monitors so consumers can verify for themselves that their materials are being shredded securely. The event is hosted in partnership with Department of Parks & Recreation and the Department of Sanitation.

"As I have even experienced myself, identity theft isn't just an inconvenience, it's a crime that can have serious financial consequences," said Consumer Affairs Commissioner Jonathan Mintz. "Shredding key documents with sensitive personal data like account information or social security and other identification numbers is the single best measure individuals can take to protect themselves. Our 4th annual Shred Fest is aimed not just at helping shred at least 80,000 pounds of documents like we did last year, but to raise New Yorkers' awareness to protecting themselves."

"Having your identity stolen can turn your life upside down," said John Feinblatt, the Criminal Justice Coordinator and Chief Advisor to the Mayor for Policy and Strategic Planning. "The good news is that consumers can take simple steps, like shredding documents, to safeguard their personal information and avoid becoming a victim. I encourage New Yorkers to clean those old files out of their closets and drawers and bring them to Shred Fest so their documents can be safely destroyed and their personal information can remain secure."

The Federal Trade Commission reported that in 2010, its top complaint was identity theft with nearly 16,500 New Yorkers filing identity theft complaints, making the State eighth in the nation for the number of complaints per capita. Shredding documents that contain personal identifying information before throwing them away is one of the most important ways consumers can prevent identity theft.

"Keeping your sensitive information out of the wrong hands is as simple and important a protection as locking your front door – and something all New Yorkers should do," said Council Member Garodnick. "Identity theft is a pernicious crime, whose effects can linger for a long time in places like your credit history. This service from the City can help ensure that doesn't happen."

The event has received generous support from Municipal Credit Union and Staples, which donated Staples MailMate personal paper shredder to be given to the first four participants at each location. Consumers participating in Shred Fest will also receive information on how to protect themselves against identity theft. Shredding services have been generously donated by **Brink's Document Destruction, Cintas Document Management, Proshred NY, Shred-it** and **Time Shred Services**. All of the shredded paper generated by Shred Fest will be recycled.

"Municipal Credit Union is proud to partner with New York City on its 4th annual Shred Fest. We always encourage our members to protect themselves by ensuring no one can gain access to their personal and financial information. Identity theft is a serious issue facing our society today. Our participation in this year's

Shred Fest is just another way to spread this important message to our members and all New Yorkers. We are pleased to be able to support the City's efforts to educate all New Yorkers about the need to protect themselves from identity theft," said Kam Wong, President and CEO of Municipal Credit Union.

"Staples is committed to helping New Yorkers properly dispose personal documents," said Kevin Downes, regional vice president of Staples. "With an extensive and quality line of shredders on the market, Staples makes it easy for anyone to shred, whether it's at the home or office. Through our support of Shred Fest, Staples is introducing people to the variety of shredder options available for safeguarding personal or business information."

"Cintas is dedicated to providing New Yorkers with document management services held to the highest standard of security," said Matt Peloso, General Manager, Cintas Document Management. "Our recent expansion in the region enables us to provide our trusted services to a greater number of New York-area companies and consumers to help them become more secure and efficient."

"Proshred NY is proud to once again be a part of New York City's Shred Fest and we're honored that we can offer the same high security document shredding enjoyed by our commercial customers, to hundreds of NYC residents," said Proshred NY President John Brice. "With so many New Yorkers living in apartments, the handling of recycling and discarded documents is outside of their control, which makes it critically important that residents be especially vigilant when it comes to protecting their printed information. At Shred Fest, like Proshred does for all of its commercial customers, documents will be shredded right in front of participants at curbside, leaving no doubt that their confidential material is safe and secure."

"Shred-it is proud to support Shred Fest, and to provide an opportunity for community members to minimize their exposure to identity theft and fraud," says Vincent R. De Palma, President and CEO at Shred-it. "We help our clients protect themselves and their customers every day by destroying sensitive documents that are no longer needed. Organizing events such as this will raise awareness about the dangers of identity theft and fraud and encourages community members to take the necessary steps to protect themselves from these crimes."

New Yorkers are invited to bring mail and other documents that contain personal information to be shredded and securely disposed. Stapled documents can be shredded, however, documents bound with metal binder clips cannot. Suggested documents include:

- Bank statements that are at least one year old and do not contain tax-related information
- Pay stubs (only after you have received your Form W-2)
- Credit card applications
- Documents that contain Social Security Numbers, account numbers, password/PIN information, birth dates, private contact information and signatures.

Free shredding will be offered at the following 16 locations across the City:

	<p><b>BRONX:</b>  Bronx Park (Bronx Park East and Boston Road; near Ben Abrams Playground)  Franz Sigel Park (Grand Concourse between 175th and 158th streets)  Co-op City (Triangle Plaza at Co-op City Boulevard and Rombouts Avenue; near the Municipal Credit Union)</p>
	<p><b>BROOKLYN:</b>  Bensonhurst Park (Cropsey Avenue and Bay 29th Street)  Cadman Plaza (Cadman Plaza West; opposite Clark Street)  Prospect Park (Prospect Park West and 3rd Street)  Flatbush Nostrand Junction (near Flatbush Avenue and Nostrand Avenue; near the Municipal Credit Union)</p>

	Coney Island (Surf Avenue between 16th and 17th Streets; next to Municipal Credit Union Park)
	<b>MANHATTAN:</b> Columbus Circle (Merchant's Gate: Columbus Circle between Central Park South and Central Park West) St. Nicholas Park (West 135th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue) Union Square (South Plaza: East 14th Street and Union Square East)
	<b>QUEENS:</b> Vincent Daniels Square (51st Street and 43rd Avenue) Flushing Meadows Corona Park (Parking lot: 111th Street between 54th and 56th Avenues) Roy Wilkins Park (Parking lot: 177th Street & Baisley Boulevard) Juniper Valley Park (71st Street and 62nd Drive; near Brennan Field)
	<b>STATEN ISLAND:</b> Arthur Von Briesen Park (Parking lot; Bay Street and School Road)

Shred Fest is part of DCA's ongoing campaign to raise awareness about what New Yorkers can do to protect themselves from identity theft. The campaign also includes distribution of 20,000 Shred Fest flyers in English and Spanish, posting 700 Shred Fest posters in English and Spanish, and 5,000 advertisements displayed on the Department of Sanitation's trucks and sweepers to promote the free paper-shredding event.

For more identity theft prevention tips or to find a Shred Fest location near you, visit [nyc.gov/shredfest](http://nyc.gov/shredfest) or call 311.

DCA enforces the Consumer Protection Law and other related business laws throughout New York City. Empowering businesses and consumers to ensure a fair and vibrant marketplace, DCA licenses more than 78,000 businesses in 55 different industries. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses alike about their rights and responsibilities. DCA's Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) is the first local government initiative in the nation with a mission to educate, empower, and protect New Yorkers with low incomes so they can build assets and make the most of their financial resources. Toward that end, OFE seeks to increase access to high-quality, low-cost financial education and counseling; improve access to income-boosting tax credits; connect households to safe and affordable banking and asset-building products and services; and enforce and improve consumer protections to enhance financial stability. For more information, call 311 or visit DCA online at [nyc.gov/consumers](http://nyc.gov/consumers). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and find us on [Facebook](#).

The Criminal Justice Coordinator is the Mayor's chief policy advisor on criminal justice matters and is responsible for developing and implementing policies, legislation, and strategies in the fields of public safety and criminal justice. The Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator also serves as a liaison to the City's

prosecutors, the New York State Office of Court Administration, and state and federal criminal justice agencies. The Coordinator's Office works closely with the City's law enforcement agencies, including the Police, Correction, Probation, and Juvenile Justice Departments.

\*City Employees not eligible

---

### IT'S YOUR IDENTITY...PROTECT IT! FOLLOW THESE TIPS:

- **Shred first, trash last.** Never throw out papers with sensitive information, such as your Social Security Number, until you've shredded them.
- **Be careful when you receive suspicious telephone and e-mail offers.** Never give personal information over the phone and never click on unfamiliar e-mail links, particularly e-mails from financial service providers.
- **Safeguard your computer using antivirus and firewall software.**
- **Check receipts.** Make sure receipts do not show your credit card's expiration date or more than its last five digits.
- **Review your bank and credit card statements for unusual activity.** Monitor when your monthly bills and account statements typically arrive and review your statements carefully.
- **Check your credit report for unusual activity.** Request your free annual credit report online at [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) or call 1-877-322-8228.
- **Opt out of mail solicitations.** Register your address at [www.optoutprescreen.com](http://www.optoutprescreen.com) or call toll-free 1-888-567-8688.

### ALREADY AN IDENTITY THEFT VICTIM? TAKE ACTION QUICKLY:

- **File a police report.** Report identity theft to your local police precinct. Keep a copy of the report.
- **File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).** File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at [ftc.gov](http://ftc.gov) or call the FTC's Identity Theft Hotline toll-free at (877) ID-THEFT (438-4338). Keep a copy of the complaint.
- **Place a fraud alert on your credit report with one of the three major credit bureaus.** By placing a fraud alert on your credit report, creditors must contact you before opening any new accounts or making any changes to your existing accounts. As soon as the credit bureau you contacted confirms your fraud alert, the other two credit bureaus will be automatically notified to place fraud alerts. All three credit bureaus will send you your credit report free of charge. The three major credit bureaus are Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. Visit [nyc.gov/consumers](http://nyc.gov/consumers) for more information.
- **Close all fraudulent accounts.** Call and speak with someone in the security or fraud department of each company where a fraudulent account was opened in your name. Close all accounts. Most likely they will ask you to follow up in writing so that there is a written record for your file. Remember to send all correspondence via certified mail, return receipt requested and keep copies. If you do not have to follow up in writing, ask them to send you a written confirmation that the accounts were closed.

## IS YOUR BUSINESS PROTECTING CUSTOMERS' INFORMATION? HERE'S HOW:

- **Implement security protocols.** Review how your business protects customer information- i.e., where information is stored and who has access to it – and change protocols as necessary to increase security. Train employees so they know the company's privacy policy and how to protect customers' personal information.
- **Ask for ID.** Employees should ask for identification when customers pay by credit card. If employees are suspicious of a transaction and think the card may be stolen, they should call the store's credit card processing service and report "Code 10." This phrase unobtrusively alerts the credit card company of potential identity theft activity.
- **Collect less information.** Only collect the information necessary to complete the transaction and store it only as long as needed. The less customer information you store, the less you have to protect.
- **Restrict access.** Make sure documents that contain customers' identifying information, such as applications or merchant copies of credit card receipts, are not in sight of employees or the public, or otherwise accessible. A locked storage space can offer good protection.
- **Safeguard computers.** Install antivirus and firewall software on computers and regularly update it. Make sure that password-protected screen savers turn on once a computer is idle.
- **Stay current with online security measures.** Your technology manager should remain aware of new issues or areas of concern in online security. Check with the Federal Trade Commission at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) for recommended resources about technology updates.