



# TRAINING BULLETIN

Los Angeles Police Department

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## FINANCIAL CRIMES

### TOPIC

The crimes of forgery and identity theft have become a growing problem for the Department and the community. There has been a marked increase of these crimes over the past several years, increasing the likelihood that field personnel may need to complete a financial crime investigation or arrest. The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to clarify Department policy and procedures pertaining to completing a forgery or identity theft-related investigation and/or arrest. Commercial Crimes Division (CCD) has primary investigative responsibility for all Forgery, Identity Theft, and Forgery-related Embezzlement reports on a Citywide basis.

### FORGERY

Anyone who signs the name of another person (or fictitious person) to a document, with the intent to defraud, knowing that he or she has no authority to do so, presents, utters, passes, attempts to pass or offers to pass the document has committed a forgery. If any portion of the following documents are forged, altered or counterfeited, they should be considered fraudulent:

- Checks
- Credit/Debit cards or numbers
- Credit applications
- Credit/Debit card sales invoices
- Counterfeit currencies
- Prescriptions
- Financial documents (including Real Estate documents)

**Note:** No money or merchandise needs to be exchanged for the document. The forged document or a photocopy of the document **must** be present in order to complete a forgery report.

### Forgery Reports

A forgery report shall only be taken for an individual, business, or financial institution to which the forged/fraudulent document was presented and it **must have been presented in the City of Los Angeles**. Forgery reports meeting the reporting requirements mentioned may be completed at any Area desk. All other victims should

be referred to the law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction where the crime occurred.

In the narrative portion of the report, describe the circumstances relating to how the person reporting became aware of the crime, identify the evidence and to whom the evidence was presented and provide complete witness information for all parties involved.

**Note:** Each victim of a forgery requires a separate report and separate Division of Records (DR) Number. However, only one report and one DR Number is required for multiple documents presented to the same reporting person that are connected by the same identifying account number, suspect, or victim. If an arrest is made for a forgery, do not utilize the Combined Crime and Arrest section on the arrest report. A separate Investigative Report (IR) **shall** be completed.

### **Forgery-Related Embezzlement**

Embezzlement is a theft committed by someone in a position of trust, typically a bookkeeper or accountant. Commercial Crimes Division investigates embezzlements when forgery is the primary element of the crime (e.g., forged checks). All other embezzlement cases should be handled by Area Detectives.

### **IDENTITY THEFT**

Identity Theft is the unauthorized use of another person's identifying information to obtain credit, goods, or services (e.g., unauthorized use of a credit card number, forged, altered or counterfeit checks written on the victim's account, any misuse of a Social Security number for financial gain or employment, and automated teller machine theft). Victims of identity theft may be a person or business.

No financial loss or paperwork is required to complete an Identity Theft Report; however, its absence must be explained in the narrative portion of the report.

### **Identity Theft Reports**

**An Identity Theft Report shall only be taken for an individual who resides in or a business that is physically located in the City of Los Angeles.** Identity Theft Reports meeting this reporting requirement may be completed at any Area desk. All other victims should be referred to the law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction over the residence or business, per Penal Code Section 530.6(a).

In the narrative portion of the report, describe the circumstances relating to how the person reporting became aware of the crime, identify the evidence and to whom the evidence was presented, and provide complete witness information for all parties involved.

**Note:** In conjunction with completing the IR, the reporting officer **shall** complete a Forgery/Identity Theft Supplemental, Form 03.07.00, and this form becomes a page of the report.

## **COURTESY REPORTS**

In cases where circumstances exist that would make it impractical for a person to report a forgery or identity theft to the concerned agency, a courtesy report may be completed with prior supervisory approval.

## **EVIDENCE**

Supporting paperwork (e.g., a counterfeit check, forged prescription, or fraudulent credit application) for a forgery or identity theft is to be submitted with the IR, **not** booked as evidence.

The DR number shall be typed or written in ink on the upper right corner of a manila envelope prior to placing the documents in the envelope to prevent contamination of the documents. Attach the manila envelope containing the unfolded forged/fraudulent documents to the back of the completed IR with a paper-clip. **Do not use staples or tape.**

**Exception:** Forged/fraudulent items such as identifications, credit cards, and checkbooks, shall be booked as evidence.

## **Bulk Booking of Evidence for Identity Theft, Forgery, and Property Reports**

Property Division will accept Identity Theft/Forgery bulk evidence items **separated and itemized** for booking per the CCD's investigator's requirements, based on case filing and prosecution.

The evidence items that are individually itemized on the Property Report, Form 10.01.00, are the items the Investigating Officer (I/O) considers significant for filing purposes. The remainder of the voluminous bulk items (e.g., additional counterfeit credit/debit/gift cards, driver licenses, checks, emails, etc.) are important to the case, but do not need to be individually itemized on the Property Report.

**Note:** The Identity Theft/Forgery bulk items listed as evidence shall be photocopied (front and back) prior to being booked.

## ARRESTS AND BOOKING

During normal business hours, booking advice **shall** be obtained from the CCD Financial Section that conducts the follow-up investigation for the Area of arrest. Off-hours booking advice can be obtained from any Area Watch Commander or Area Night Detective. If additional advice is needed, the Department Operations Center (DOC) *may* be contacted. Any Area Watch Commander or the Custody Services Division Watch Commander where the arrestee is booked can give booking approval.

Commercial Crimes Division investigators are available off-hours when the situation involves an extraordinary circumstance that requires a CCD investigator's expertise and advice. Commercial Crimes Division investigators may be reached telephonically via the DOC.

**Note:** Prior to making off-hours notification, a supervisor at the scene should be briefed of the circumstances involving the nature of the call.

Officers handling the arrest of suspects in possession of Identity Theft/Forgery items shall:

- Attempt to contact the true owners of the credit cards or locate other identifying information, and determine that they did not permit the suspect to possess the cards or information;
- Complete an IR for a single true owner, as determined by the I/O and obtain a DR number; and,
- List additional true owners in the case Follow-up Report, Form 03.14.00, after determining that they did not permit the suspect to possess their identifying information.
- **Commercial Crimes Division must receive notification on all Identity Theft/Forgery arrests.**

**Note:** Watch Commanders shall ensure all arrest reports which CCD has investigative responsibility shall be completed, scanned, and emailed to [FinancialCrimes@lapd.online](mailto:FinancialCrimes@lapd.online).

Investigating Officers receiving investigative responsibility for suspects in possession of Identity Theft/Forgery items of victims shall:

- Ensure that arresting officers have completed all their required steps, otherwise the I/O shall be required to complete them;
- Advise each true owner to monitor their credit, and obtain an Identity Theft report from the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction of their residence, or business, if needed; and,

- Provide the true owner(s) the corresponding arrest DR number and the I/O's contact information for reference. At the discretion of the I/O, a courtesy letter may also be sent, so the true owner(s) may use it as an aid to repair their credit.

When handling an Identity Theft/Forgery-related arrest, officers should refer to the attached Financial Crimes Booking Advice/Approval Guide. Officers need to complete the appropriate paperwork promptly, to ensure that CCD investigators obtain arrest reports in a timely manner, and to ensure the Department follows the Los Angeles District Attorney's filing guidelines as it pertains to suspects in possession of Identity Theft/Forgery items. It will also provide CCD investigators sufficient time to conduct interviews and file a criminal case within judicial time constraints.

**This Bulletin cancels and supersedes Volume XLII, Issue 1, Financial Crimes, January 2012**

Field Training Services Unit  
Police Training and Education

DISTRIBUTION "A"

**FINANCIAL CRIMES BOOKING ADVICE/APPROVAL GUIDE**

| Area of Arrest      | Business Hours Booking Advice              | Off-Hours Booking Advice  | Booking Approval                                | Location Males Booked         | Location Females Booked        | Location Evidence Booked                          | Location Reports/PCD's Left |
|---------------------|--|---|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Valley Bureau Areas | Valley Financial Section<br>(818) 374-9420 | Any Area W/C,<br>Area Night Detective<br><br>or<br>Department Operations Center | Any Area W/C<br><br>or<br>Valley Jail W/C       | Valley Jail,<br>Van Nuys Area | Valley Jail,<br>Van Nuys Area  | Valley Property Section,<br>Van Nuys Area         | Van Nuys Records            |
| All Other Areas     | Metro Financial Section<br>(213) 486-5920  | Any Area W/C,<br>Area Night Detective<br><br>or<br>Department Operations Center | Any Area W/C<br><br>or<br>Metropolitan Jail W/C | Metropolitan Jail             | 77 <sup>TH</sup> Regional Jail | Evidence and Property Management Division,<br>MDC | *SRDU<br>(213) 486-8300     |

\*Specialized Reports Distribution Unit, level P-1, Police Administrative Building

**Note:** Weekend Probable Cause Determinations (after 1700 hours on Fridays) shall be taken to the Department Operations Center, 500 E. Temple St., L.A., for processing.