



AG URGES VIGILANCE AGAINST ID THEFT AS PAPERS AND INFORMATION MAY BE SCATTERED IN TORNADO AFTERMATH

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange urges citizens to be vigilant for identity theft that could occur as confidential information may be scattered in the debris of damage from Wednesday’s catastrophic tornadoes.

“This is a potential crisis that many may not anticipate as they are struggling to recover from the devastation that struck them less than a week ago,” said Attorney General Strange. “Vigilance and knowledge to prevent identity theft are our strongest weapons, and it is my great hope that we can stop most of these crimes before they occur. In the case of identity theft as well as other crimes, I am committed to protect Alabamians from criminals who would take advantage of those affected by this disaster.”

Under Alabama law, identity theft is a class C felony punishable by one to 10 years imprisonment and fines of up to \$15,000 for each count.

The tornadoes destroyed homes and scattered possessions, including sensitive documents containing personal information. Attorney General Strange urged those who may have lost sensitive documents to be proactive in protecting themselves against identity theft by taking the following steps:

1. Monitor your credit report periodically – Alabama consumers can obtain a free copy of their credit report from each credit bureau annually by calling 1-877-322-8228 or visiting www.annualcreditreport.com.
2. Consider adding an initial security alert to your credit report - If you have lost your identification information or suspect that it has been or could be used fraudulently, you can add an initial security alert to your credit report by visiting www.experian.com/fraud/center.html or by calling 1 888 EXPERIAN (1-888-397-3742). An initial security alert lasts 90 days and can be renewed if necessary. An Initial Security Alert filed with Experian will be shared with Transunion and Equifax automatically.
3. Secure your mail - If you are going to be away from home or are unable to pick up your mail, ask the Postal Service to hold your mail until you return. If you will not be able to return soon you may consider having your mail forwarded temporarily.

Consumers may receive additional information on obtaining credit reports and may request a complaint form by contacting the Attorney General’s Office of Consumer Protection at 1-800-392-5658 or by writing to 501 Washington Avenue, Alabama 36130. Consumers may file a complaint online at www.ago.alabama.gov/consumer_form.cfm.

