Safeguarding Your Social Security Number

One of the best ways to become a victim of identity theft is to lose control of your Social Security Number (SSN). Unfortunately, many health insurance companies issue ID cards that include the account holder's SSN.
This means that if you lose your wallet, you could lose a lot more than just the cards and the cash that it contains.

Beginning January 1, 2004, insurance companies that offer policies in California were required to change this practice for the California customers. Although it took a couple of months, my daughter recently received her new card, minus the SSN.

Several large employers have also forced their insurance vendors to remove SSN's from their employee’s cards. Several months ago, I read that IBM was doing this.

Some of the more consumer conscious insurance companies in the market have already made the switch from SSN's for all of their clients. Kaiser, which is the largest insurer in the USA, is a good example.

While progress is being made, a lot still needs to be done. If you work for a small company that provides you with benefits, the chances are that your company doesn't have enough power to get its insurance company to change their practices. If however you work for a large organization, your company may very well have the leverage needed to force its insurance carriers to remove SSN's from all employee ID cards and mailings. In either case, it is a good ideal to speak with the Human Resources Department inside your organization and to voice your concerns about privacy and the use of SSN's for any purpose other than taxes.

You can also take action by telling the CEO's of three large insurance carriers, that still use SSN's, about your concerns. Consumer's Union has started a letter writing campaign to these people. You can take action by clicking here.

by Jim Malmberg