

## **Red Flag on Mailboxes Invitation to Identity Thieves**

The Lee County Sheriff's Office Economic Crimes Unit reports an increase in the number of checks being stolen throughout the community, which in turn are being altered, forged and cashed by various suspects. "It's safe to say we've seen more than a dozen such cases in the past couple of weeks," says ECU Sergeant Jonathan Washer.

Some suspects have actually stolen business checks and used the bank account information on the checks to manufacture counterfeit checks and cash them outside of Lee County.

"The best way people can avoid being victimized is to put their outgoing mail in a secure mail box maintained by the post office," says Washer. He warns against placing mail that contains checks and/or credit card information in your mailbox and raising the red flag. "The red flag may notify your postal carrier of the mail, but unfortunately it also tips off unscrupulous folks to mail they can steal."

Another way to combat identity thieves is to buy a locking mail box for your home, which can be purchased at most hardware stores. A locking mail box has a slot for the mail to be dropped into. The owner can then unlock the box to retrieve the mail (the same concept of mail slots at apartment complexes, etc.)