



# Fraud Alert!

## **BEWARE OF THE INFORMATION YOU SHARE**

**Weld County District Attorney Kenneth R. Buck would like you to take note of the following information so that you aren't the next victim.**

*William Stanley Doe was born April 18, 1925, to John and Jane (Smith) Doe in Anytown, CO. He attended Central High School and went on to earn a teaching degree from the State University. He enjoyed reading and working in his garden. Mr. Doe passed away Monday night at his home. He was 82. Mr. Doe is preceded in death by his parents and his brother. He is survived by his wife Jill and their daughter Amy. Visitation will be Saturday from 3:00 p.m.- 6:00 p.m. at 1234 Broad St. and services will be held Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. at the Main Street Church.*

A loved one passes away, and you have to write the obituary which will appear in the local newspaper—what information should you include? What information should you leave out? Why should you worry?

An obituary is a caring summary of a person's life, but it can also be a valuable resource to thieves who read these announcements daily.

Let's break this down as a thief would read it:

- First, middle and last name of the deceased.
- Birth date of the deceased.
- The deceased's mother's maiden name.
- Address of the deceased.

All of this information can be used to steal the deceased person's identity. A skilled search on the web, with this information in hand, can result in the thief learning of the deceased person's social security number. From there, credit card applications can be filled out, loans applied for, etc. The damage can be immense! And although the

family will not likely be held responsible for the debt incurred through this type of identity theft, it can cause hassles, headaches and frustration for family members who have to undo the damage caused to credit and bank records of the deceased.

Let's break it down another way:

- The family lives at 1234 Main St.
- Services will be Sunday at 9; therefore, no one will be in the house on that day for a couple of hours minimum—plenty of time to burglarize the home.
- And if the thief doesn't feel up to burglarizing the home on that day, the thief knows (with a high degree of certainty) that the only person who may be in the home is an elderly woman — who now lives alone.

Does this mean you shouldn't include much information in an obituary or perhaps not submit an obituary at all? No, but be aware of information you do include.

### **TIPS**

- Use only the birth year, not the entire birth date.
- Mail copies of the death certificate to all three credit reporting agencies and all credit issuers to cancel accounts.
- Contact the DMV and cancel the driver's license and prevent duplicates from being used.
- Run a credit report on the deceased to ensure there is no suspicious activity.
- Ask for a directed patrol from your local law enforcement agency or perhaps a family friend or neighbor to keep an eye on the house and the widowed spouse.

**Contact your local police agency if you think you are a victim of a crime.**

**To contact the Weld County District Attorney's Office, call (970) 356-4010 ext. 4702.**

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**S E R V I C E**