

Invasion of the Personal Information Snatchers

“Stealing personal information is nothing new,” opined moderator Christopher Painter during a Friday Continuing Legal Education program during the ABA Annual Meeting, “Invasion of the Personal Information Snatchers: Pretexting, Caller-ID Spoofing and Beyond.” Painter, principal deputy chief, Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section, Department of Justice, said in the Section of Criminal Justice-sponsored program that new technology has changed the ways of stealing that information as well as created new crimes. “Anonymity emboldens criminals,” stated Painter.

Barry M. Sabin, deputy assistant attorney general, Criminal Division, Department of Justice, discussed the government perspective, including a synopsis of the Telephone Records and Privacy Act Of 2006; the Bush administration’s Identify Theft Task Force; and the July 2007 legislative package offered by the Department Justice on ID theft.

After providing a definition of social engineering – whereby someone manipulates another person into performing actions based on flaws in human logic -- Priya Sanger, with Wells Fargo in San Francisco, mentioned that the problem her company faces most frequently is “phishing,” whereby someone sends an email under false pretenses to try to obtain personal information. Sanger detailed several different types of phishing, including when a person physically comes to a location pretending to be a computer technician or copier repairperson. There are several different methods that Wells Fargo is using to combat phishing, continued Sanger, including user education.

James Brosnahan, a San Francisco-based trial lawyer, completed the presentation by providing a brief history of privacy.

* * *