By Jan Schultz, The Imperial Republican News Editor

We can no longer say with certainty that identity theft won't happen to us. Based on informational programs in Imperial this week, the odds are pretty good that you or someone in your family will be touched by the crime.

It's happened in mine, and most people I know have horror stories of identity theft, too.

Ryan Sothan of Nebraska's Attorney General's Office gave programs Tuesday and Wednesday in Imperial, targeting several groups here.

He told audiences that identity theft was the No. 1 consumer complaint in the U.S. last year. In Nebraska alone, 5,000 identity theft complaints were received.

It normally costs a victim over $5,000 in losses and for the added costs to clear his or her record.

Unfortunately, since the vast majority of us use the Internet, that proves to be a prime target for identity thieves. Sothan strongly warned against putting so much info out on Facebook without security settings established.

The speaker said those who use Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn have the highest incidence of fraud.

Credit cards, too, are another big vehicle for unauthorized purchases on your accounts. You've seen the ads—maybe it's smart today to go up to the counter with your card and oversee the transaction, rather than send it off with the waiter in a leather binder.

One of Sothan's big points was to be aware of your surroundings and people around you when making a purchase with credit cards or checks.

It sounds like we can't be too careful these days.