

Economic **Driver**Auburn business
devises sleeve to
protect identityBy Charlene Arsenault
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AUBURN — Poof. Identity gone. Money's stolen. We've all heard stories. In one move online, or in a store, your personal info can be nabbed from you. Fraud is a big-time problem, particularly in America, and thieves have gotten even more savvy about getting the info.

Particularly after the massive Target breach last year, the push is on to upgrade credit and debit cards to smart card technology in which an embedded chip is encrypted with account information.

While smart cards have been in Europe for many years, the United States is catching on to the reality that these cards are much safer. "Credit card networks have set an October 2015 deadline for most U.S. merchants to upgrade their payment systems," Bloomberg News reported April 12.

Yet identity thieves can still steal account information from a smart card by using non-contact Radio Frequency Identification readers.

To serve this new market and one that is predicted to grow, Sheppard Envelope Manufacturing Co., 133 Southbridge St., developed Identity Theft-

Guard, a RFID shielding sleeve to protect such things as ID badges, driver's licenses and credit and debit cards. The sleeve is constructed from a custom laminate, made by a vendor, that blocks radio frequency waves.

Sheppard announced April 8 it received approval from the U.S. General Services Administration for its Identity TheftGuard. That means the product is on an "approved" list for government agencies to purchase.

The company's progression into radio frequency protection is an extension of its credit card sleeves that keep the card's magnetic swipe strip safe, even after years of being in someone's wallet, said project manager Edward N. Haddad.

"Smart credit cards, which are embedded with a readable chip, have been in Europe for many years," Mr. Haddad said, "but are increasingly being



Ed Haddad, project manager at Sheppard Envelope Manufacturing Co. in Auburn, holds an Identity TheftGuard sleeve that protects ID cards, licenses and credit and debit cards against radio frequency readers that can be used to steal owners' information.

used in the U.S. Identity theft is rising and with the amount of personal information stored in ID cards, one can become an easy target for those seeking that information. This is especially true for federal employees and contractors that have access to high security areas."

Sheppard Envelope's work with the vendor that makes the high-strength laminate was a natural integration, said Mr. Haddad. The company has a patent pending on Identity TheftGuard, although competitors have similar products.

The government will naturally be an important market for the new sleeve, and the sleeves are available to the gen-

eral public through Sheppard Envelope's website (sheppardenvelope.com) and an extensive domestic and international dealer network.

"We have had unique inquiries in the past from several gov-

ernment agencies," said Mr. Haddad, "but because we were not on the approved products list, they could not purchase from us. Now that we have been approved, we will be reaching out to those agencies."

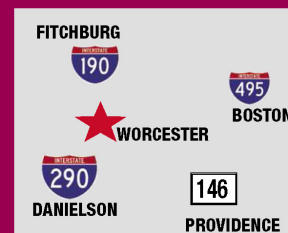
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