



It's New Year's Eve – Do You Know What Your Confetti Is?

In 2012, it was reported that confetti found at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade was made from shredded police documents. The documents contained confidential information, including detectives' Social Security numbers, bank information and unveiled undercover officers' identities, WPIX-TV, New York, reported. The documents were "strip-shredded" which, if not done properly, may produce strips of documents that can be read.

When you're shredding documents containing personally identifiable information (PII) including protected health information (PHI), you must insure that the documents are rendered unreadable. Criminals will sometimes look in trash cans for papers containing PII because they know it can be used to steal someone's identity. You should never just throw paperwork away when it could contain such private data. It is very important to make sure that both electronic and paper data containing PII is properly disposed of to prevent unauthorized disclosure and use. Shredding can often be your best friend when destroying paper documents.

Here are some steps you can take to make sure PII is properly destroyed:

- Know and follow any data retention policies established by your department. These policies will inform you on how long various types of data must be kept.
- Follow the established departmental procedures for securely destroying data. There will be separate procedures for paper and electronic records.
- If you are unsure how to comply with retention and destruction requirements, ask your Privacy Officer.

We at the Privacy Office hope you have a safe and happy (and incident-less ☺) New Year!

Note: Your agency/bureau/department/division may have specific requirements – always check your policies and procedures. If you have questions, contact your Privacy Officer.