BACKGROUND CHECKS
By Jack Geary

Remember when you complete a pre-employment application form and sign it, you give permission to the employer to obtain complete background information, including employment information, search public records, driving records and credit history. Your authorization is valid during the pre-employment period and for so long as you are employed. Read the fine print on the application forms you sign. Do a search with the keyword 'Background Checks' to identify a number of companies that employers use to outsource this investigative task.

Do not lie on an application form and other forms related to your employment, especially forms that you sign. A job applicant may sometimes fail to disclose certain information for an entry-level job. Once hired the failure to disclose information will come back to haunt the individual should they seek a promotion- triggering a more extensive background check. Always keep a copy of the application you submit.

REFERENCE CHECKS
The California Labor Code grants employees the right to inspect their personnel files. However, this section also grants employers the right to exempt disclosure of letters of reference and ratings, reports or records obtained prior to an applicant's employment. The California Consumer Reporting Agencies Act requires employers to disclose background information if a third party was used to acquire the information. The California code requires employers to disclose background information even when a third party is not used.

It is unclear at this time if the code requires employers to disclose background information obtained prior to employment, such as, information obtained by checking your references and statements made by you on an application form. A good rule to follow is to avoid making false or misleading statements in writing. Furthermore state and federal laws are always changing therefore it is wise to keep informed. If an employer would discover negative information it is important to prepare a response.

HEADS UP!
You should check your Social Security contributions at least once per year to insure all employers have paid required contributions. For an additional fee, Social Security can give you a report listing the names of all employers who have contributed (deducted from your paycheck) to Social Security Account.