



**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**


OCT 11 2006

**Office of the Chief  
Information Officer**

1400 Independence  
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Washington, DC  
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TO: Agency Chief Information Officers  
Agency Information System Security Managers

FROM: Lynn Allen   
Associate Chief Information Officer  
Cyber Security

SUBJECT: Eliminating Commercial Instant Messaging Use in USDA

Cyber Security (CS) will soon begin monitoring efforts to reduce commercial Instant Messaging (IM) use within the Department. These IM programs have the ability to bypass security controls and download files similar to peer-to-peer software. CS has adopted the same policy as the peer-to-peer use and will issue incident tickets for IM usage of 75 connections or more. These incidents are reported to US-Cert as user misuse of resources. Beginning on October 17, 2006, CS will send out IM traffic reports to each agency through the ISSPM mailing list, and will start opening incident numbers starting December 1, 2006. With this in mind, I strongly encourage agencies to take a proactive approach at removing as much IM traffic initiated from its networks as possible.

Because of the nature of these incidents, CS will not require the full reporting process outlined in DM 3505-000, "USDA Computer Incident Response Procedures," dated March 20, 2006. Instead, the agency ISSPM needs to certify to CS that (1) the system creating the IM traffic has been identified; (2) the system has been cleaned of all IM software; (3) the downloaded media (i.e., graphics, pictures, music, movies, etc.) has been wiped from the system; and (4) the employee has been counseled on the prohibition of the use of IM software and the limited use policy.

If you have any questions regarding this memorandum, please contact Steven Bryce Eckland, Computer Security Operations Division Director, at 816-926-7330, or via e-mail at [steven.eckland@usda.gov](mailto:steven.eckland@usda.gov). Thank you.