USDA

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Department of
Agriculture

Office of the Chief
Information Officer

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Washington, DC
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OCT 1 0 2007

TO: Agency Heads

FROM: Charles R. Christopherson, Jr.
            Chief Financial Officer
            Chief Information Officer

SUBJECT: Implementation of Two-Factor Authentication

One of our plans for protecting personally identifiable information for customers and employees is to strengthen the controls used to access our computer resources. These controls are based on confirming the authenticity of a person's identity; that is, verifying they are who they claim to be when they log in to our computer systems. There are multiple methods for confirming a user's identity and they are generally classified into three areas:

Authentication Factor	Example
Something the user **knows**	password, pass phrase, or personal identification number
Something the user **has**	ID card, security token, software token, phone, or cell phone
Something the user **is or does**	fingerprint or retinal pattern, DNA sequence, signature or voice recognition, unique bio-electric signals, or another biometric identifier

The most common control used for accessing our systems today is "something the user knows" and that is typically implemented as a user name and password. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-06-16, *Protection of Sensitive Agency Information,* June 23, 2006, requires the use of a stronger method for confirming a user's identity that is known as **two-factor authentication.**

As the name implies, two-factor authentication adds a second security method, typically "something the user has," to the standard practice of requiring a password to log in to a computer system, i.e., your desktop personal computer, laptop, or an online Website.

The Department of Agriculture (USDA), along with the rest of the Federal government, is beginning to implement Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12) to provide an interoperable identity card to employees and contractors that either access government computer systems or need to access government facilities that are protected with electronic access controls. USDA is going to leverage the HSPD-12 credential (also know as the USDA LincPass) to meet the two-factor authentication requirement.

As a first step towards meeting this goal, laptop users will be among the first to obtain HSPD-12 credentials and use them as the access control for laptop computers. We expect to begin implementing the capability to use these credentials in March 2008.

The following actions will be taken to achieve this goal:

Action	**Required Completion Date**
Create a list of employees and contractors with laptop computers accessing USDA network resources. Summary counts need to be reported to the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO).	Complete
Complete initial integration of Agency Active Directory with the Enterprise Identity Management System (EIMS)	December 14, 2007
Purchase smartcard readers and middleware for laptop computer users.	Underway by OCIO
Distribute smartcard readers and middleware to appropriate persons.	February 22, 2008
Update Agency Active Directories to support LincPass-related attributes.	February 29, 2008
Ensure all laptop computer users have a USDA LincPass.	February 29, 2008
Begin using LincPass two-factor identification on laptop computers.	March 3, 2008
Agencies certify completion: use of LincPass two-factor identification on laptop computers.	September 30, 2008

USDA's HSPD-12 team has started working on several activities to ensure success with this timeline, including:

- Weekly communications with your Human Capital persons to ensure that employee records are prepared in a timely manner;
- Active Directory – EIMS integration assistance; and
- LincPass enrollment location and schedule coordination.

I understand that implementing HSPD-12 card issuance simultaneously with card use presents a greater challenge. However, I am requesting your support for implementing the recommendations of OMB Memorandum M-06-16, including the use of two-factor authentication using the USDA LincPass.

Please contact Chris Niedermayer, Associate Chief Information Officer, Information and Technology Management, at (202) 690-2118 or Owen Unangst, HSPD-12 and EIMS Project Manager, at (970) 295-5538 with any questions or comments. You can also contact the EIMS integration team at eims.integration@ftc.usda.gov

cc: Agency Chief Information Officers
     Agency Deputy Administrators for Management
     Subcabinet