



November 6, 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR Secretarial Officers
Heads of Operating Units

FROM: David A. Sampson 

SUBJECT: Safeguarding Personally Identifiable Information

As you know, we are pursuing an aggressive action plan to address deficiencies in regard to the management of personal property and the protection of personally identifiable information (PII). (The definition of PII can be found in the Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-06-19, dated July 12, 2006.)

As part of its ongoing efforts, the Department has identified an area in which PII security must be improved immediately: the use of external and removable devices/media (e.g., flash drives, memory keys, thumb drives, floppy disks, CDs, DVDs) and laptop computers to store PII. To improve PII security, this memorandum directs two operational changes that should be carried out immediately throughout your organization in all of its locations, subject to any labor relations obligations.

External and Removable Devices/Media

In light of the challenge of controlling and accounting for external and removable devices/media, it is not prudent to use these devices/media to store PII. Therefore, external and removable devices/media must no longer be used to store PII under any circumstances.

Laptop Computers

Similarly, the very portability that makes a laptop a useful tool also increases the risk that it will be lost or stolen. Consequently, any laptop not encrypted with FIPS 140-2 compliant full-disk encryption must no longer be used to store PII under any circumstances.

Operating Unit and Departmental Resources

I understand that the operational changes described above may result in new challenges in your organization's efforts to accomplish its mission. As we move forward, I encourage you to consult with the Department's CIO, Barry C. West, and his staff regarding any issues related to the implementation of these changes. Please feel free to contact William Lay, Director of the Office of Information Technology Security, Infrastructure and Technology, at 202-482-4708 or Terri Ware, Chief of Staff for the CIO, at 202-482-4797 with any questions or concerns.