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United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Office of the Chief  
Information Officer

1400 Independence  
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Washington, DC  
20250

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL USDA EMPLOYEES & CONTRACTORS

FROM: David M. Combs  
Chief Information Officer

SUBJECT: Protecting and Safeguarding Privacy Act Protected Information

Several compromises of Privacy Act protected information have occurred at other federal departments over the last several weeks. I want to remind USDA employees, contractors and partners of their responsibility to ensure that the personal information held by their agencies on customers and employees is safeguarded and used only for the purposes for which it has been collected.

The Privacy Act of 1974, as amended (5 USC 552a) states that:

Each agency that shall collect and maintain only information about an individual as is relevant and necessary to accomplish its mission.

No agency shall disclose any record which is contained in a system of records...except pursuant to a written request by, or with the prior written consent of, the individual to whom the record pertains except to those officers and employees who have a need for the record in the performance of their duties.

Any officer or employee of an agency, who by virtue of his employment or official position, has possession of, or access to, agency records which contain individually identifiable information ... and who knowing that disclosure of the specific material is so prohibited, willfully discloses the material in any manner to any person or agency not entitled to receive it, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined not more than \$5,000.

The Department of Agriculture has established administrative, technical and physical safeguards to comply with the Privacy Act as well as protect its information technology systems. A web-based training course entitled "OCIO Privacy Basics" is available on AgLearn.

All USDA employees, contractors and partners who handle Privacy Act protected data in the performance of their duties must comply with all Department requirements. If you have any questions, please contact Wilbur Crawley at 301-504-4154 or email him at [Wilbur.Crawley@usda.gov](mailto:Wilbur.Crawley@usda.gov).