

**U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of Inspector General  
Office of Audit**

## **BRIEFLY...**

Highlights of Report Number: 23-05-028-50-598, to the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management / Chief Information Officer.

### **WHY READ THE REPORT**

This report contains information as to the effectiveness of the Department of Labor's electronic media sanitization procedures. This report includes findings and recommendations as to how the Department can better sanitize electronic media prior to its transfer or disposal.

### **WHY OIG DID THE AUDIT**

News stories show a disturbing trend concerning the disposal of surplus electronic media. CNET news reported two Massachusetts Institute of Technology students purchased 158 used disk drives for less than \$1000. These students found 129 disk drives were still working, and contained thousands of active credit card numbers, along with pharmaceutical records, legal correspondence, corporate memoranda, and email messages.

During survey work in 2003, OIG found that 85 percent of the computers that were ready to be transferred or disposed of contained varying degrees and combinations of licensed operating system software, licensed application software, and data of a sensitive, personal, and/or confidential nature. As a result of this survey work, the Department took immediate corrective action. To follow-up on the correction action taken by the Department, we initiated the audit and testing of the Department's policies and procedures regarding electronic media sanitization.

The objective of our audit was to determine if DOL is effectively sanitizing surplus electronic media prior to transfer or disposal in order to minimize the risk associated with unintentional release of information.

### **READ THE FULL REPORT**

To view the report, including the scope, methodology, and full agency response, go to:  
<http://oig.dol.gov/public/reports/oa/2005/23-05-028-50-598.pdf>

**September 2005**

### **DOL Needs To Perform Electronic Media Sanitization More Effectively prior to Transfer or Disposal**

#### **WHAT OIG FOUND**

The OIG found that DOL regional office computer hard drives that were ready to be transferred or disposed of were properly sanitized. The OIG found that national office computer hard drives that were ready to be transferred or disposed of contained varying combinations of licensed operating system software, licensed application software, and unencrypted data of a sensitive, personal and/or confidential nature.

#### **WHAT OIG RECOMMENDED**

We recommended that the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management take the following actions:

- Review the implementation of the department-wide electronic media sanitization policy for uniformity and develop verification procedures that include testing.
- Coordinate with each Agency's Information Technology Security Officer to ensure future IT specific security training includes proper sanitization of electronic media.
- Periodically verify agencies' effectiveness in sanitizing electronic media to assure adequate security.
- Research emerging technologies as an additional measure to protect DOL information assets.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management generally agreed with the report and has begun taking actions to address the findings and recommendations.