

ARS CSREES ERS NASS

Bulletin

Title: IT Hardware and Software Policy

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This Bulletin establishes the policy and provides guidance for the Agency's standardized desktop and laptop computer configurations. Additionally, it provides requirements and guidance for the purchase of operating system, Office Suite, and security software, including licenses.

This Bulletin identifies standard configuration for the Agency's personal computing devices and establishes the policy for the purchase of such products. These standards and policies are intended to aid in the planning and budgeting for replacing IT hardware, software products, and licenses. Adherence to this policy will reduce operating costs, improve system security, increase end-user satisfaction, and enhance budget planning. This bulletin will be updated as new requirements are identified.

Standardized Operating System and Software Configuration

Personal computers (PCs) and laptop computers (laptops) must be configured with Microsoft XP Professional and Microsoft Office 2003. Additionally, a Client User Access License (CAL) is needed for each user that will connect to the Exchange email system. All PCs and laptops purchased must be capable of being upgraded to Microsoft Vista.

Software Requirements

Microsoft Office 2003
Anti-Virus Software Suite (includes Anti-Spyware and Central Management Console)
PatchLink Update Agent
Data Encryption for laptops

Operating System Requirements: PCs and laptops

Microsoft Windows XP Professional

Operating System Requirements: Macs

MAC OS X v 10.4 or higher

Microsoft Products

Microsoft Operating System and Office Suite Software and Licenses

Management Units (MU) are responsible for purchasing Microsoft Operating System and Office Suite software and licenses. (Note: the Area/NAL may choose to consolidate the purchase of licenses in one order.) If currently-owned Windows XP and Office 2003 software was not purchased with upgrade assurance, the MU will need to purchase new licenses for Microsoft Vista and Office 2007 when the moratorium is lifted.

Existing licenses purchased through the Agency's 2004 Enterprise Agreement with ASAP Software may be transferred from a user's old PC to a new PC; however, it cannot be used on multiple PCs. Additionally, licenses purchased through the ASAP contract are entitled to a Vista

and Office 2007 upgrade. The OCIO will provide the Areas/NAL with information related to the licenses previously purchased through the Enterprise Agreement contract.

Client Access License (CAL)

Microsoft Corporation licenses the Exchange environment by requiring each user to have a Client Access License. On July 1, 2007, Headquarters purchased 11,050 CALs that are in effect through June 30, 2008. This number was derived by working with the Area Offices and Headquarters and utilizing Human Resource data.

In June 2008, CALs will need to be renewed. In order to ensure Agency compliancy and purchase these licenses in the most efficient manner, the OCIO will continue to purchase CALs if required on behalf of the Agency. The OCIO will issue a data call in May of each year asking for the number of additional license requests by Area based on the currently licensed CALs. That information will be used to renew the existing licenses and purchase new ones if necessary.

Each MU will be responsible for funding the cost for renewing and purchasing its share of the CALs. The Financial Management Division (FMD) will distribute information related to projected costs and will work with Area Offices, NAL, and Headquarters to distribute appropriate costs to the MUs.

Mandatory Security Software

ARS is required to deploy and centrally manage several software technologies in order to remain compliant with the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) and USDA policies. Those technologies include the following:

Anti-Virus Software Suite (includes Anti-Spyware software and Central Management Console). This anti-virus software suite must be installed on ARS devices prior to their being connected to the USDA/ARS networks. Anti-virus software should not be included with the purchase of any new desktop or laptop.

Patch Management. USDA has mandated the use of PatchLink Update by all agencies (USDA DM3535-002). The PatchLink Update agent software must be installed on ARS devices prior to their being connected to the USDA network.

Data Encryption. USDA has mandated that data encryption software be implemented on all computers and mobile devices.

As further information and testing results become available, more information regarding data encryption policies will be issued.

Vulnerability Scanning. USDA has mandated that all ARS desktops and servers be scanned for vulnerabilities on a quarterly basis (USDA DM3530-001).

Funding for Mandatory Security Software. Similar to the process of distributing CAL costs, FMD will work with the Area Offices, NAL, and Headquarters to develop a methodology for distributing the costs associated with security software to the appropriate MUs. Using these funds, OCIO will purchase and maintain a sufficient number of anti-virus software suite licenses, PatchLink licenses, data encryption software licenses, and vulnerability scanner licenses to support all ARS devices. The cost of OCIO maintaining licenses Agency-wide is considerably less expensive than the individual per-unit cost when licenses are bundled with a new computer.

Hardware

All desktops, laptops, and mobile devices should be replaced or added on a regular basis as part of a technology refresh strategy defined in the ARS Hardware Lifecycle Management Bulletin, Bulletin 05-001. The policy in this bulletin should be followed as such technology is replaced. Guidance for the purchase of laptops will be issued as a separate document as soon as specific information is available.

If planning for a longer lifecycle than recommended, consideration should be given to purchasing a more powerful desktop, laptop, or Internet capable telephony device to ensure that systems will offer useful performance for a longer period of time. It is recommended that a longer warranty and service contract be purchased to cover extra year(s) of service. However, planning for a longer life cycle might increase the risk that technological advances will push the machines into early obsolescence or require expensive technology upgrades to support new capabilities.