Fact Sheet

SOCIAL SECURITY

New Security Features of the Social Security Card

Background

The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA), P.L. 108-458, was signed into law on December 17, 2004. Section 7213(b)(1) of the law requires the Commissioner of Social Security, in consultation with the Secretary of Homeland Security, to form an interagency Task Force to establish requirements for further improving the security of Social Security cards and numbers; and, for the Commissioner to provide for implementation of those requirements.

The Task Force was formed in January 2006 and issued its recommendations in May 2006.

Status of Changes

As a result of the Interagency Task Force, SSA plans to include several new security features to the Social Security Card. Some of these new features are overt and are listed below. SSA has already implemented two overt features and will implement the other four on October 1, 2007.

Changes Implemented in April 2007:

- The card issuance date was added to the front of each card. This date reflects the date that SSA processed the application for that particular card. Information about the issuance date was also added to the perforated attachment to the card.

- Signing instructions were added to the perforated card attachment. The instructions state "ADULTS: Sign this card in ink immediately. CHILDREN: Do not sign until age 18 or your first job, whichever is earlier."

Changes to be Implemented on October 1, 2007:

- A guilloche background pattern, which is a unique non-repeating spiral design, will replace the existing marbleized pattern. The new pattern is very similar in color to the current background and will continue to have the security feature of being erasable. This background is computer generated and very difficult to duplicate.

- A latent image has been added to the SSN card face. This feature, a text image, is visible only when the document is viewed at specific angle or angles.

- A split fountain production method was added which produces a unique ink color mixture on the press that then transfers to the paper. The colors on the background of the card flow from blue to aqua.

- Color shifting inks were added to the face of the card. These inks have a multilayer light interference ink pigment imbedded that creates a noticeable color shift when moved in front of a light source. This feature is also used in currency.

Additional Change

In addition to the above IRTPA changes, SSA implemented a change in response to requests from employer groups to distinguish the last name of the individual on the card. As a result, beginning on September 8, 2007, the individual's last name was displayed on a separate line on the card directly below the first and middle name.

Prior Versions of the Social Security Card

- There are different versions of the Social Security card in circulation and all prior versions of the card are valid.

- Individuals **do not** have to request a new Social Security Card.

- Because all prior versions of the cards are valid, employers can select to use the free, Social Security Number (SSN) verification services offered by SSA to verify that their employees' names and SSNs match our records. Information about employer SSN verification services can be found at: http://www.socialsecurity.gov/employer/ssnv.htm.

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