



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

The Office of Inspector General performed this review in response to an inquiry related to controls over identification documents used for issuing the new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Smartcard badges. We performed this review as a result of a specific incident. We conducted a limited review of EPA's policies and procedures for processing identification information collected, responding to Smartcard badge incidents, and handling of defective Smartcards.

Background

Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 established the requirements for a common standard for identifying credentials issued by federal departments and agencies to federal employees and contractors. EPA instituted the EPA Personnel Access and Security System (EPASS) program to satisfy this Directive. The program is part of EPA's larger effort to create an integrated system to safeguard and manage workforce identity, facility access, and computer system access throughout EPA.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Liaison at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2008/20080916-08-P-0267.pdf

Identification Proofing, Incident Handling, and Badge Disposal Procedures Needed for EPA's Smartcard Program

What We Found

Although EPA developed detailed procedures to guide the EPASS staff's issuance of new Smartcard identification (ID) badges, an employee error in using the new ID card system resulted in an EPA employee having ID documents and other identifying information incorrectly associated with another EPA employee. An EPASS employee incorrectly accessed the wrong employee's computer record, scanned the ID documents for the employee requesting the Smartcard, then associated the scanned documents with the incorrectly accessed computer record. Also, EPA's procedures for issuing ID cards lacked a vital step required by federal guidance. In particular, EPA procedures did not require EPASS staff to visually inspect ID documents and compare them against the individual requesting the Smartcard and the name on the accessed computer record.

Although we did not discover more than one incident, we found that EPA lacks procedures to ensure employees take steps to correct similar incidents when they occur. Further, EPA lacks procedures for handling and disposing of defective Smartcard badges that contain personally identifiable information. According to Security Management Division managers, documenting procedures has been delayed because management attention has been focused on meeting the Office of Management and Budget deadline to roll out the EPASS program.

Authenticating an individual's identity is a critical factor for controlling physical and logical access to EPA resources. Without taking immediate steps to correct the weaknesses noted, doubts will exist over whether EPA has the ability to become a trusted agent for verifying ID credentials as federal agencies integrate their Smartcard programs.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Director, Security Management Division, Office of Administration and Resources Management:

- Update existing identification card issuing procedures to ensure the procedures include all mandatory steps.
- Create incident-handling procedures to be used by EPASS program staff when errors in the ID card issuing process occur.
- Create and implement procedures for proper handling and disposal of defective ID badges.

The Agency agreed to implement our recommendations, and we consider the actions planned to be satisfactory.