

July 10, 2012

Frequently Asked Questions

What has changed since the Department of Labor posted the April 10 plan for ensuring the security of the print media/newswire lock-up facility?

A.: The Department is unwavering in its commitment to protecting the integrity of the process by which important national economic data are released to the American people. Following the posting of a lock-up policy statement, representatives of the news media expressed concern that they could not achieve their journalistic goals, and the Department has met with news media representatives to address those concerns. The revised policy statement that is being implemented takes into account the needs of the news media and the Department's commitment to make sure its economic data are secure prior to release. The revised policy strengthens internal controls over the use of technology in the print media lock-up facility and includes a new Embargo Agreement that prohibits reporters from bringing digital devices and personal items, among other belongings, into the lock-up facilities.

When will the new safeguards take effect?

A.: Some of the safeguards are in place; others are being phased in over the next several weeks and will be fully implemented by September 5. The timetable allows for a period of testing and verification of new security solutions.

What other steps has the department taken to protect economic data?

A.: The Bureau of Labor Statistics, the principal federal agency responsible for measuring labor market activity, working conditions, and price changes in the economy, has had robust security measures in place for many years as part of a comprehensive approach to ensure the security of the sensitive economic data it produces. BLS undergoes regular third-party audits conducted by the Department's Office of Inspector General. In addition, BLS has a dedicated security division that audits its internal systems by performing daily vulnerability assessments, executing annual penetration testing, and periodically testing and evaluating data and network security procedures.

Once the Department has fully implemented its new security solutions and controls, Sandia National Laboratories, which conducted a review in 2011, will be asked to undertake a follow-up review and make recommendations for any necessary changes.

Why are parts of the Sandia security review report posted on the Department's website redacted?

The redactions are necessary to avoid the possibility of an outsider exploiting the vulnerabilities described in the report documents that continue to exist in the security of the print media lock-up facility and pre-release process. There also are immaterial redactions on the cover of each

document for privacy. Upon full implementation of the new safeguards for the lock-up, the department expects to release entirely un-redacted copies of the report documents, save for immaterial privacy redactions.

Will news organizations be required to use government-owned computers?

A.: No. Under the revised plan, news organizations may choose to use the Department's equipment, use privately-owned equipment, or use a combination of government and private equipment. Privately-owned equipment must meet certain requirements. News organizations, for example, must purchase directly from the manufacturer or an authorized reseller of the manufacturer, and the equipment must be shipped directly from the manufacturer to the Department. Any hardware acquired by the news organizations for use in the lock-up facility is subject to inspection upon arrival to ensure it complies with agreed-upon specifications.