



# Homeland Security

June 4, 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR: ALL DHS EMPLOYEES AND CONTRACTORS

FROM: Hugo Teufel III   
Chief Privacy Officer

SUBJECT: Protection of Social Security Numbers

The Social Security number (SSN) is very sensitive personally identifiable information created for the purpose of administering Social Security and tax laws. Because of its unique relation to an individual, any use of an SSN poses additional privacy and security risks, including the growing problem of identity theft.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) must take all possible steps to ensure that we only use SSNs for limited purposes and, when used, that we maintain and transmit SSNs securely. As Federal employees and contractors, you should be aware that the failure to protect SSNs adequately may constitute a violation of the Privacy Act of 1974, which could result in civil and criminal penalties as well as disciplinary action.

In our effort to minimize the use of SSNs, the Department will implement the following policies and practices:

- All DHS employees and contractors must review the use of SSNs for all systems, rosters, and other files, and, to the extent possible, remove the SSN, unless the collection and use is a legal requirement or is pursuant to a specific authorized purpose. (See June 4, 2007, DHS Chief Privacy Officer Memorandum on the Use of Social Security Numbers attached to this Memorandum (Privacy Policy Guidance Memorandum 2007-002).)
  - All DHS employees and contractors shall stop all new uses of SSNs in documents, such as contact lists, pre-clearance or access control lists, call-up/alert rosters, staff human capital spreadsheets, tracking system reports, and other similar documents that are disclosed within and outside of DHS, unless the collection and use is a legal requirement or is pursuant to a specific authorized purpose.
  - Documents or files containing SSNs must not be posted in public areas, either electronically, such as in a publicly-accessible network folder, or physically, such as on an office/conference room wall. Disseminate all documents containing SSNs only to personnel with a valid need-to-know.