

Computer disk with personal information of Department of Energy's Idaho site employees lost in transit

The Department of Energy's Office of Health, Safety and Security has been informed that a password-protected computer disk containing personal information of current and former employees at DOE's Idaho facilities has been lost in shipment. There is no evidence that personal information on the disk has been compromised, but workers are being advised to take precautions to protect their identities. Notifications to current and former workers at the Idaho facilities are underway.

Office of Health, Safety and Security is working with UPS, which was transporting the disk, in an effort to recover it and to ensure that the data is secured. In the meantime, all shipments of worker personally identifiable information by DOE's Former Worker Medical Screening Program information have been suspended until an investigation has been completed. The Department deeply regrets any concern or inconvenience this may cause our current and former Idaho employees.

The information in question was originally generated by the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) to support a medical screening program for former workers who could have been exposed to hazardous materials on the job. This data contained information on past and present employees who worked at DOE's Idaho facilities prior to 2006. Idaho National Lab then provided this information without incident to Queens College, who is supporting DOE's Former Worker Medical Screening Program. The Idaho National Lab transmitted the data requested by Office of Health, Safety and Security in accordance with the data protection standards of the Department at the time, and instructed the subcontractor of the Department's rules for protecting private data.

While in its possession, Queens College shipped a password-protected computer disk to another program contributor, the CPWR — The Center for Construction Research and Training, formerly known as the Center to Protect Workers' Rights, (CPWR) — as part of the ongoing program. This computer disk was shipped overnight using UPS. On January 30, 2009, UPS notified Queens College that the package had been damaged in transit and its contents were currently missing.

Office of Health, Safety and Security is conducting an investigation of this incident to evaluate the adequacy of the procedures being used by contractors, subcontractors, and other program contributors for transmitting worker privacy information and for timely reporting of such incidents when they occur.

Workers can register for a free credit report through www.annualcreditreport.com, the federally-mandated site sponsored by the three credit reporting agencies, TransUnion, Experian and Equifax. The law entitles individuals to one free credit report from each agency per year. Employees can also place a 90-day "fraud alert" on their file through the above site or by calling one of the credit reporting agencies directly at the numbers listed below. Additionally, to help minimize the risk of identity theft, the Office of Health, Safety and Security is offering to provide credit monitoring services for one year for those whose names were on the disk.

TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289, Equifax: 1-877-576-5734, Experian: 1-888-397-3742

Updated information on the missing disk and data will be provided as it becomes available.

Editorial Date March 9, 2009
By Brad Bugger