



## GUIDELINES FOR STORING SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS AND OTHER CONFIDENTIAL DATA

The storage of confidential information, such as a social security number, should not be taken lightly, regardless of the storage medium (paper or electronic). Here are some basic guidelines to follow if you choose to accept the responsibility for storing confidential data-

1. Do not store any document that contains social security number (SSN) or other confidential information unless it is critical to your business process.
2. Confidential data should be stored in an area that has physical access controls in place. Filing cabinets or computers that store SSN should be in a locked room. The file cabinet should have a locking mechanism, and a computer should have a strong password and other controls in place (see 6 and 7).
3. Access to paper or electronic records that contain SSN should be limited only to staff that have a need to know.
4. Files that contain SSN should not be stored on removable media (i.e. thumb drives) unless that media is encrypted.
5. Files that contain SSN should not be stored on a laptop unless the hard drive of that laptop has an encrypted file system in place.
6. Desktop computers that store files that contain SSN or other sensitive data must keep operating system patches, anti-virus, and anti-malware software up to date.
7. Desktop computers that store files that contain SSN or other sensitive data must use strong passwords. Password length should at least be 15 characters long and contain a mix of numbers, special characters and upper and lower case letters.
8. Computers that store confidential data should not be used to access social networking sites or other web sites that pose a significant risk of data exposure.
9. Data retention policies should be followed to reduce the risk of storing confidential data after it is no longer needed.
10. If confidential data is stored on a network file share or server, extra caution should be taken to make sure those files are only accessible to individuals that have a need to know.