



SOCIAL SECURITY

MEMORANDUM

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Refer To: S1RL1

To: See Below

Co-Chairs
National Health and Safety Partnership
Committee for Security

Subject: Contact Station and OHA Remote Hearing Site Security--ACTION

Attached are new Social Security Administration's (SSA) procedures designed to help ensure safety and security for employees who work in contact stations and OHA remote hearing sites. As approved by the National Health and Safety Partnership Committee for Security, these procedures provide guidelines for managers on evaluating the security of an onsite location, briefing employees who will be traveling to them, and providing additional security measures as required.

These procedures are effective upon receipt. Please provide them to all offices to whom they apply.

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Attachment

Addressees

Jim Marshall
Earl Tucker
Agatha Joseph
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All Regional Commissioners
All Regional Chief Administrative Law Judges

I Objective

To prescribe a list of physical and protective security features for the following: contact stations and OHA remote hearing sites. Security measures for current OHA Satellite Offices (3-5) will be assessed separately by a security contractor.

II. Background

Employees who work at contact stations and OHA remote hearing sites may need additional security measures because of their isolation from any nearby office support and security. They operate in locations usually not under Government control, perform their duties alone or in teams of not more than 2-3 employees, and are normally not accompanied by management officials.

This document does not replace Article 9 of the National Agreement. This document supplements AIMS instructions on security-related issues (see appendix). AIMS-required security measures such as reporting all incidents through the management system on a timely basis, development and use of security action plans, etc., remain in effect.

III. OHA Remote Hearing Site Security Measures

Remote hearing sites are those that are established for a hearing. Normally, the administrative law judge is the only SSA employee present at the hearing since recorders are contracted for locally. If a local contract hearing reporter is not available, an SSA employee will usually attend as the recorder. The only other individuals present at the hearing are the claimant, his/her representative, and expert witnesses, if required. Approximately 70% of remote hearing sites are temporary (e.g., space rented on an as-needed basis or free space loaned to the Agency by other Federal, State or local governments). Other sites may or may not be controlled by the Federal Government.

The following security measures apply to all sites:

A. Management Survey

A survey is required to identify the security protection provided at the site so that management can arrange for any protective measures deemed necessary. Contact with local police, the Federal Protective Service (FPS) and chief operating officials at the site (hotel security, hospital security, welfare office, etc.) should be done at this time. A security action plan (see AIMS GAM.g.12.06) should be written by the manager performing the survey and covered as part of the site briefing given before the employee is at the site. The surveyor should also consider the availability of a telephone, separate restrooms, facility exits, adequate parking area lighting, a place to secure the employee's personal belongings, and security for Government records and property, as necessary.

B. Union Notice

In accordance with the National Agreement, Article 4 the Agency will provide the Union reasonable advance notice so that appropriate negotiations may occur on bargainable issues.

C. Employee Site Orientation

Local managers must orient/brief their employees before they report to one of these sites. Employees should be aware of the type of site, its location and specific security concerns for the area, applicable emergency procedures and contacts, the availability of local help and any special precautions they need to take to ensure their safety and security. Work location adjustments will be made to the extent possible to lower risk to employees. Each employee should be issued some form of Agency employee identification and where appropriate, local site identification. Employees should be briefed about protecting themselves. Employees must be aware of their surroundings and the exit routes to use in case of an emergency, including fire. In accordance with the national agreement local managers are to give the Union the opportunity to be present at these orientation/briefing sessions.

D. Employee Transportation

In some areas, as determined by management, a non-Government vehicle, including a rental vehicle, may be more appropriate than a GSA motor pool car. Consideration should be given to where the vehicle is parked to limit possible vandalism or destruction or to prevent its presence from calling attention to the employee.

E. Onsite Contract Security Services

Consideration should be made for having a uniformed guard onsite when a security problem can be anticipated. When scheduling an appointment with a potentially disruptive client, onsite security services should be considered. This service can be made on a long or short term basis. This does not change existing practices and/or procedures with respect to guard service.

F. Provision of a Cellular Telephone

A traveler to a remote site will be provided with a cellular telephone for use onsite (if the space does not already have an easily accessible telephone). Consideration should be given to providing a separate phone for each employee if more than one will be going to the site. Local emergency telephone numbers (state or local police or FPS) should be determined and preset in the telephone(s) to allow dialing without delay. When occupying the work site, employees should make periodic contact with the local hearing office, the local police and/or the site officials to validate their presence and well-being. In areas where there is limited police or local official support, an increase in the frequency of this contact may be warranted.

G. Reduce Face-to Face Possibilities of Confrontation

A Title 18 warning sign in the appropriate language(s) may be affixed to a board displayed during hearings. Hearings for claimants who may cause trouble during the hearing should be scheduled on Government property with onsite security, or at private locations such as hotels which have their own security services that can assist in an emergency or which are in the close proximity of the local police station or with a police presence.

H. Other Considerations

Minimizing the risk to employees should be the primary concern. Security mirrors for better observation, Title 18 signs to alert the public as to the Federal law, measures to be considered during travel to and from the work site, and other security measures deemed necessary and appropriate from the management survey should be considered. Additionally, employees should be trained in interpersonal relations and handling difficult people.

IV. Contact Station Security Measures

Contact stations are locations that are conveniently located in temporary space to facilitate a group of claimants. Usually, this is loaned space provided by a private support center, public facility (e.g., fire station, library, etc.), senior center, migrant camp, hospital, health center, or existing Federal facility. These stations are most frequently not Government-controlled space. The station limits its hours and days of the week and uses rotating employees from the local district or branch office. The sites usually do not have onsite security, separate restrooms, duress alarms, protective barriers or the support of other employees or management responding to a call for assistance.

The following security measures apply to all sites:

A. Management Survey

This survey of available sites should identify the security protection provided at the site so that management can arrange for any protective measures deemed necessary prior to Agency use. Contact with local police, the FPS and site operating officials should be done at this time. A security action plan (see AIMS GAM.g.12.06) should be written by the manager performing the survey and covered as part of the site briefing given before the employee is at the site. The surveyor should also consider the availability of a telephone, separate restrooms, facility exits, adequate parking area lighting, a place to secure the employee's personal belongings, and security for Government records and property, as necessary.

B. Union Notice

In accordance with the National Agreement, Article 4, the Agency will provide the Union reasonable advance notice so that appropriate negotiations may occur on bargainable issues.

C. Employee Site Orientation

Local managers must orient/brief their employees before they report to one of these sites. Employees should be aware of the type of site, specific security concerns for the area, applicable emergency procedures, the availability of local help, and any special precautions to ensure safety and security. Work locations should be adjusted to the extent possible to minimize risk to employees. Each employee should be issued some form of Agency employee identification and where appropriate, local site identification. In accordance with the national agreement, local managers will give the Union the opportunity to be present at these orientation/briefing sessions.

D. Placement of Interviewer in Relation to Interviewee

Security measures should be taken to ensure the interviewer(s) have an available escape route. Employees should be briefed about protecting themselves. Employees must be aware of their surroundings and the exit routes to use in case of an emergency, including fire.

E. Employee Transportation

In some areas, as determined by management, a non-Government vehicle, including a rental vehicle, may be more appropriate than a GSA motor pool car. Consideration should be given to where the vehicle is parked to limit possible vandalism or destruction or to prevent its calling attention to the employee.

F. Provision of a Cellular Telephone

A traveler to a contact station will be provided with a cellular telephone phone for use onsite (if the space does not already have an easily accessible telephone). Consideration should be given to providing a separate phone for each employee if more than one will be going to the site. Local emergency telephone numbers (state or local police or FPS) should be determined and preset in the telephone to allow dialing without delay. In areas where there is limited police or local official support or when the employee is expected to move from one location to another or serves as a mobile contact station, periodic calls to the assigned office manager or staff may be required to verify the safety and security of the employee.

G. Onsite Contract Security Services

Consideration should be made for having a uniformed guard present onsite when a security problem can be anticipated. When scheduling an appointment with a potentially disruptive client, onsite security services should be considered. This service can be made on a long term or short term basis.

H. Duress Alarm Installation

Duress alarms for interviewers should be considered for installation where they can be easily reached without the interviewees noticing. The alarms should be connected to the onsite security service or another Agency that will relay this alarm to the police.

I. Barriers

Whenever deemed necessary and possible, barriers should be erected to protect employees from a direct threat from the public. These barriers do not have to be walls, but should provide adequate protection from a direct assault. Care must be taken not to allow these barriers to obstruct the view of any management or security services responding to a call for assistance. GSA's Rules and Regulations Governing Buildings and Grounds should be posted at all entrances to the facility and/or at least at barrier entrances.

J. Limit Face-to-Face Confrontations

Employees should be advised to schedule at a later date those individuals who appear to be disruptive. Arrangements should be made to have a second person accompany the employee or have a local official/representative present for any anticipated disruptive interview, or for the interview to take place at a site that provides better security for the employee. A Title 18 warning sign in the appropriate language(s) may be affixed to a board displayed during interviews.

K. Other Considerations

Minimizing the risk to employees should be the primary concern. Security mirrors for better observation, Title 18 signs to alert the public as to the Federal law, measures to be considered during travel to and from the work site, and other security measures deemed necessary and appropriate from the management survey should be considered. Additionally, employees should be trained in interpersonal relations and handling difficult people.

SECURITY-RELATED AIMS APPENDIX

1. MRM, SSA.g:04.50, SSA Physical Security Program. Issued 10/11/91. Establishes and describes the Agency physical security program.
2. MRM, SSA.g:04.51, Building Security and Badges. Issued 02/15/91. Agency-wide policy guidance for employee identification system.
3. MRM, SSA.h:04.52, Property Passes. Issued 07/25/86. Headquarters property pass policy guidance.
4. MRM, SSA.g:04.53, Security of Safekeeping Equipment. Issued 11/28/86. Agency-wide policy on safekeeping equipment.
5. MRM, SSA.g:04.54, Physical Security and Personal Protection. Issued 08/01/86. Agency-wide physical security and personal protection policy and guidelines.
6. MRM, SSA.g:04.55, Intrusion Detection Systems. Issued 02/02/90. Agency-wide alarm policy.
7. GAM, SSA.g:11.03, Bomb Threats and Search Actions. Issued 11/23/90. Agency-wide policy on bomb threats and the search actions required.
8. GAM, SSA.g:11.04, Control of Demonstrations, Sit-Ins and Civil Disorders. Issued 11/16/87. Agency-wide policy on these types of emergencies.
9. GAM, SSA.g:12.01, Protective Security Program. Issued 05/24/95. Establishes and describes the Agency-wide protective security program.
10. GAM, SSA.g:12.06, Security Action Plan. Issued 05/24/95. Agency-wide policy for security action plans.
11. GAM, SSA.g:12.07, Incident Alert Reporting. Issued 05/24/95. Agency-wide policy for reporting of incidents.
12. GAM, SSA.g:02.07, Special Purpose Identification Cards. Issued 06/15/90. Agency-wide policy for employee special purpose identification cards or credentials.

Associated AIMS.

1. **GAM, SSA.g:10.01, Emergency Preparedness Program.** Issued 08/01/88. Establishes and describes the Agency emergency preparedness program.
2. **GAM, SSA.g:10.04, Emergency Lines of Succession.** Issued 03/17/92. Agency-wide policy for the establishment and maintenance of emergency lines of succession.
3. **GAM, SSA.g:11.01, Social Security Administration's Emergency Management Program.** Issued 06/11/86. Agency-wide policy for emergency management.
4. **GAM, SSA.g.11.02, Occupant Emergency Program.** Issued 10/07/91. Establishes and describes the Agency occupant emergency program.