

West Virginia Executive Branch Privacy Tip of the Week

Lock It Up!

Question:

Recently, a woman in our office had a laptop stolen from inside her office. There was some office chatter that maybe it was an “inside job” since we have to use an electronic swipe card to enter our building. Who knows? Anyway, is there anything I can do to prevent this from happening to me?

Answer:

I cannot tell you whether or not someone from your office stole her laptop, but it has become increasingly common for laptops to be stolen. A laptop’s value increases dramatically (to a thief) when the laptop contains PII, such as names, social security numbers, and financial information.

Given the common occurrence of theft, we should be especially careful with physical security measures, such as:

- Politely refusing to allow anyone you don’t know to “tailgate” through a door that requires a badge to open.
- Escorting visitors properly.
- Ensuring that doors are always secured.
- Using locking cables or secure storage to protect laptops and computers when not attended.
- Alerting security if you see anyone or anything suspicious.
- And of course, making sure the laptop is encrypted and password is protected is a must!

Make sure to consult your Privacy Officer for more information on how to protect your electronic devices (and paper documents) from theft.