



WV Executive Branch Privacy Tip

Who is listening?

You're eating at a restaurant and the group at the table beside you is having a discussion about work. You overhear the name of a friend mentioned so you listen a little closer. The group works for an accounting firm, and they are having a lunch meeting. Your friend is not the only client they are discussing. If you can hear them from another table, so could others – they could actually be giving a thief within earshot access to very sensitive information.

Unfortunately, this could also be a problem in your office. Having private conversations within earshot of other people compromises confidentiality. Confidential information should only be communicated to those who have a need to know it. You should take care that you aren't sharing the conversation with your coworkers who do not need to know. How can you maintain privacy? Be sensitive to how loudly you may be speaking. Do people down the hall comment on your conversations? Consider closing your office door and lowering your voice whenever speaking in person or on the telephone. Avoid discussions about confidential information in high-traffic areas such as hallways, reception areas, elevators, and eating areas.

Keep in mind:

- Protecting privacy is an expectation of all employees, whether on duty or off duty.
- If you overhear others discussing confidential information, let them know that they can be overheard.
- In any event, information that you overhear should not be repeated or communicated to others.
- You should report inappropriate incidents or situations to your privacy officer.

Note: Your agency/bureau/department/division may have specific requirements – always check your policies and procedures. If you have questions, contact your Privacy Officer.