

**West Virginia Executive Branch
Privacy Policy: Security Safeguards**

Security Concerns When Transmitting PI

Question:

How can I protect personal information in transit?

Answer:

Do you need to send personal information (PI) or other sensitive information to someone else? You should be aware that PI in transit is always PI at risk! Here are some steps you can take to help protect PI during transmission.

- ✓ Understand the Office of Technology (OT) rules for data transfers. Some PI, such as sensitive data elements, must be encrypted during transmission over unsecure channels (such as email over the Internet). If you need assistance with encryption, talk to your manager or contact the OT Service Desk by phone at either 558-9966 or 1-877-558-9966 or send an email to servicedesk@wv.gov.
- ✓ If you move PI to a portable device, such as a laptop, PDA or USB drive, consider whether the device or the files need to be encrypted.
- ✓ Always double check addresses for PI recipients – whether email address or physical addresses! Be careful of email programs that auto-populate email addresses. It's very easy to send emails to the wrong recipient. If you are sending emails containing sensitive PI, try not to multi-task. You should devote your full attention to the email to avoid making mistakes.
- ✓ When sending PI via courier or mail, consider whether you need to be able to track the package. Be sure that the recipient is expecting the delivery, and ask for a confirmation. If the PI is sensitive, talk to the OT Service Desk about encrypting the files.
- ✓ Never send more PI than the recipient needs. For example, if a vendor is preparing a mailing, the vendor needs the names and address of the people who will receive the mail. The vendor does not need the individuals Social Security numbers, employee identification numbers, or any other PI. Remove the unneeded PI before you send the vendor the file.
- ✓ If someone you don't know asks you to transmit PI to him, don't be afraid to ask questions or to verify that the transfer is okay. We all want to be helpful, but it is more important to be cautious! You should also confirm that vendors have appropriate contracts in place to protect the PI that they receive from you.

- ✓ If you ever send PI to the wrong person or if a file containing PI goes missing during transit, report the incident to your agency Privacy Officer and your Supervisor.