

The EPA Took Additional Actions to Strengthen Controls to Account for and Secure Laptops

December 14, 2023 | Report No. 24-P-0011



Report Contributors

LaSharn Barnes
Vincent Campbell
Nancy Dao
Ashley Jaramillo
Shaheryar Qureshi
Gina Ross
Scott Sammons

Abbreviations

DSSD	Desktop Support Services Division
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
OIG	Office of Inspector General

Cover Image

Pallet of wrapped laptops outside the Region 6 help-desk office. (EPA OIG photo)

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At a Glance

The EPA Took Additional Actions to Strengthen Controls to Account for and Secure Laptops

Why We Did This Audit

To accomplish this objective:

We performed this audit to determine whether the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency headquarters and select regions have sufficient internal controls to properly account for and secure laptops in their possession to prevent theft and misplacement. We initiated this audit in response to two hotline complaints alleging that 136 laptops were either lost, stolen, or missing within the EPA headquarters Desktop Support Services Division in 2019 and 2020.

As of April 11, 2022, the Agency asset management system showed that the EPA possessed 35,736 laptops with an estimated value of \$56.14 million, averaging \$1,571 per laptop. Because we identified EPA Regions 4 and 6 as the regions having the most laptops and computers, we audited them along with the Desktop Support Services Division. The EPA's *Personal Property Manual*, published in June 2017, establishes roles and responsibilities for personal property management.

To support this EPA mission-related effort:

- *Operating efficiently and effectively.*

To address this top EPA management challenge:

- *Managing grants, contracts, and data systems.*

Address inquiries to our public affairs office at (202) 566-2391 or OIG.PublicAffairs@epa.gov.

[List of OIG reports.](#)

What We Found

The Desktop Support Services Division and the Region 4 Mission Support Division had sufficient controls to account for and secure laptops within their possession to prevent theft and misplacement. Their controls complied with the EPA's *Personal Property Manual* requirements including implementing controls to properly account for personal property, designating key property personnel to maintain accurate records of laptop inventory, and storing laptops in secure locations.

While the Region 6 Mission Support Division had sufficient controls to secure laptops in its possession, we identified a deficiency in its business practices to sufficiently account for new laptops received. Because of this deficiency, Region 6 did not account for two of 12 laptops that it received in January 2022 for more than 160 days in the Agency asset management system. However, once we brought this issue to the attention of Region 6 property management staff, they took immediate action to implement an additional control to further improve their accountability of new laptops received.

Additionally, the Desktop Support Services Division and the Region 6 Mission Support Division did not have fully developed and Agency-approved operating procedures for personal property management. The *Personal Property Manual* requires all program and regional offices to establish formal processes and controls to ensure that personal property assets are handled according to all laws, regulations, and EPA policy. The manual further requires that the agency property management officer approve each office's personal property operating procedures. As a result of our audit, however, the Desktop Support Services Division and Region 6 subsequently updated their operating procedures and received approval from the agency property management officer.

Because of the corrective actions implemented by the Desktop Support Services Division and Region 6, we make no recommendations in this report. The Office of Mission Support, Region 4, and Region 6 informed us that they would not be providing a written response to our draft report issued on September 25, 2023.

The EPA must execute processes with controls to enforce its stewardship of laptops and to safeguard against activities that could prevent it from protecting its assets from loss, theft, and mismanagement.



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

December 14, 2023

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The EPA Took Additional Actions to Strengthen Controls to Account for and Secure Laptops
Report No. 24-P-0011

FROM: Sean W. O'Donnell, Inspector General *Sean W O'Donnell*

TO: Kimberly Patrick, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator
Office of Mission Support

Jeaneanne Gettle, Acting Regional Administrator
Region 4

Dr. Earthea Nance, Regional Administrator
Region 6

This is our report on the subject audit conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General. This project number for this audit was [OA-FY22-0117](#). This report contains no findings or recommendations. Thus, you are not required to respond to this report. If you submit a response, however, it will be posted on the OIG's website, along with our memorandum commenting on your response. Your response should be provided as an Adobe PDF file that complies with the accessibility requirements of section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The final response should not contain data that you do not want to be released to the public; if your response contains such data, you should identify the data for redaction or removal along with corresponding justification.

We will post this report to our website at www.epaoig.gov.

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Purpose

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General initiated this audit to determine whether EPA headquarters and select regions have sufficient internal controls to properly account for and secure laptops in their possession to prevent theft and misplacement. We initiated this audit in response to two hotline complaints alleging that 136 laptops were either lost, stolen, or missing within the EPA headquarters Desktop Support Services Division, known as the DSSD, in 2019 and 2020. We also audited EPA Regions 4 and 6 because we identified them as having the most laptops and computers.

Top management challenge addressed

This audit addresses the following top management challenge for the Agency, as identified in OIG Report No. [24-N-0008](#), *The EPA's Fiscal Year 2024 Top Management Challenges*, issued November 15, 2023:

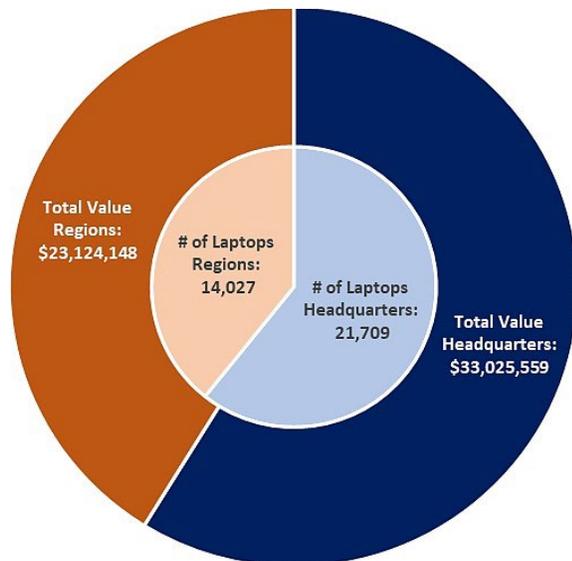
- Managing grants, contracts, and data systems.

Background

As of April 11, 2022, the EPA possessed 35,736 laptops with an estimated value of \$56.14 million, averaging \$1,571 per laptop according to the Agency asset management system. The highest individual value of a laptop was \$42,500. Figure 1 shows the number of laptops and their total value at EPA headquarters and regions.

The high-value laptop contains proprietary software used in laboratory analyses to identify anthrax, plague, and rabbit fever occurrences after September 11, 2001.

Figure 1: Laptops by location



Source: OIG analysis of laptops from the Agency asset management system. (EPA OIG image)

The EPA's *Personal Property Manual*, published in June 2017, establishes roles and responsibilities for personal property management. Examples of personal property include computers, digital cameras, firearms, motor vehicles, and furniture. For property management functions, the property accountable officer is responsible for accounting for and controlling assets within one's designated office area, as well as updating the Agency asset management system. The property custodial officer conducts annual physical inventories of each asset within one's custodial area and reports to the property accountable officer. The property custodial officer uses property records from the Agency asset management system when conducting physical inventory to verify the accuracy and completeness of property records and to safeguard property from theft, loss, waste, and mismanagement. All physical inventories must be completed by July 31 each fiscal year. However, the manual indicated that more frequent inventories may be required for sensitive property, such as desktop computers, tablets, and laptops, to assure physical custody of these assets.

Pursuant to Section 2.5.5 of the *Personal Property Manual*, division directors and branch chiefs, or their equivalents, are responsible for establishing and enforcing administrative directives and measures for EPA personal property within their control. They are responsible for ensuring that personal property is properly acquired, used, maintained, and safeguarded by property personnel.

To further safeguard sensitive property, the EPA requires these assets to be stored in a locked room or other secure manner to deter theft. The DSSD elected to use tracking software to identify the location of a laptop that is issued to the headquarters program offices and other sites under DSSD responsibility when the device is connected to the internet or the EPA's networks. Regions 4 and 6 have elected not to install the tracking software on their respective laptops since the use of the software is not mandatory; however, the regional management personnel indicated that they use cybersecurity technologies implemented within the EPA to detect when the laptops are connected to the EPA's network.

Responsible Offices

Within the Office of Mission Support, the DSSD provides desktop support services to EPA offices in Washington, D.C.; Durham (Research Triangle Park), North Carolina; Cincinnati; Ann Arbor, Michigan; and other remote sites.

The DSSD orders laptops for the EPA's headquarters program offices, including the OIG, and the regions. The DSSD handles the distribution of laptops to the headquarters program offices and other sites under its responsibility. The vendor delivers headquarters' laptops to the EPA's warehouse in Landover, Maryland. For laptops ordered for each respective region, the vendor delivers the laptops to the regions' respective shipping and receiving docks or other designated location.

Within the Region 4 Mission Support Division, the Information Technology Support Services Section supports computer help-desk operations, desktop support services, and information technology infrastructure.

Within the Region 6 Mission Support Division, the Information Technology and Operations Management Branch provides information technology help-desk and desktop services along with receiving, inventorying, distributing, accounting, and maintaining all regional property.

Scope and Methodology

We conducted this performance audit from May 2022 to August 2023 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

We assessed the internal controls necessary to satisfy our audit objective.¹ In particular, we assessed the internal control components—as outlined in the U.S. Government Accountability Office’s *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*—significant to our audit objective. Any internal control deficiencies we found are discussed in this report. Because our audit was limited to the internal control components deemed significant to our audit objective, it may not have disclosed all internal control deficiencies that may have existed at the time of the audit.

To answer the project objective, we reviewed relevant OIG and U.S. Government Accountability Office reports for findings related to lost or stolen EPA laptops. To obtain an understanding of the applicable criteria for personal property management, we reviewed relevant federal laws, regulations, guidance, and EPA policies and procedures.

Key Terminology

Lost: An asset unaccounted for by the owner.

Stolen: An asset being acquired or possessed as a result of some wrongful or dishonest act. The term “stolen” is synonymous with the term “theft.”

Missing: An asset is not found in its expected place when first searched. Missing defines a short period of uncertainty as to the whereabouts of the asset.

Sensitive property: An asset that requires special controls and accounting to ensure accountability and safeguarding. An example is an asset with retainable memory and data, such as desktop computers, tablets, or laptops.

¹ An entity designs, implements, and operates internal controls to achieve its objectives related to operations, reporting, and compliance. The U.S. Government Accountability Office sets internal control standards for federal entities in GAO-14-704G, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (also known as the “Green Book”), issued September 10, 2014.

To identify the laptop inventory for EPA headquarters program offices and regions, we performed:

- Data queries of the Agency asset management system to focus on laptops and computers within the EPA's inventory as of April 11, 2022.
- Analyses to identify the regions with the most laptops and computers, which resulted in Regions 4 and 6 being selected as audit locations for testing in addition to the DSSD.
- Analyses of laptop inventory in eBusiness to determine whether the DSSD adhered to the *Personal Property Manual* when reporting laptops within its possession as missing and lost.

We reviewed the system security plans for the Agency asset management system and eBusiness to obtain an understanding of who can make changes to the data within each system. We also reviewed the following documentation:

- Fiscal year 2021 *Certification of Personal Property Physical Inventory* for the audit locations.
- Information technology service contracts related to laptops for audit locations.
- Supporting documentation of the June and July 2022 deliveries of new laptops—purchase order invoice, packing slips, and shipping or delivery invoices—for all audit locations except for Region 4 due to building closure, to verify that the laptops received match the laptops ordered and that the property record for each laptop was created in the Agency asset management system.

To evaluate DSSD and Region 6 accounting and storage processes, we reviewed a representative sample of laptops that the EPA ordered and which were delivered in June and July 2022.

We conducted unannounced site visits to DSSD and Region 6 to observe their processes to account for new laptops delivered on-site and physical security controls to safeguard laptops. During these visits, we verified laptops locked in storage against property records in the Agency asset management system. We also confirmed that the tracking software used to locate missing or stolen laptops was activated on several laptops in the DSSD's possession by requesting DSSD management to demonstrate that the software can be used to find the laptop.

We also interviewed property officers that support the daily property management activities in the DSSD and Regions 4 and 6 to gain an understanding of their processes, standard operating procedures, and management controls for laptops received at these locations.

We limited Region 4 audit work to documentation reviews and virtual meetings because its building was closed during our audit because of a rodent infestation. We reviewed documentation to determine whether the region was properly accounting for newly purchased laptops and had standard operating procedures on property management and accountability. We did not observe, test, or assess the adequacy of the physical security controls because we did not conduct on-site visits.

Prior Reports

From 2011 through June 2023, we issued the following reports that are of significant relevance to this audit:

- OIG Report [21-P-0094](#), *EPA Improperly Awarded and Managed Information Technology Contracts*, issued March 10, 2021. We found that the EPA improperly awarded and managed information technology contracts. The EPA did not monitor and report equipment and software licenses in the agency property system as required. The EPA Office of Technology Solutions staff neglected to follow the *Personal Property Manual* to monitor, count, or report the purchased equipment, as required by federal requirements and EPA policies.
- OIG Report [18-P-0176](#), *EPA Region 5 Needs to Better Protect Information Technology Property, and Areas for Agencywide Improvement Exist*, issued May 9, 2018. We found that the EPA did not have a policy for tracking laptops in transition and personnel were unaware of information technology property status or procedural changes. Additionally, EPA staff lacked awareness of the Agency asset management system.
- OIG Report [15-P-0033](#), *EPA Needs Better Management of Personal Property in Warehouses*, issued December 8, 2014. We found that the EPA did not adequately inventory property nor provide adequate oversight to ensure effective and efficient use of EPA resources. The EPA did not have policies and procedures in place to account for its nonaccountable and nonsensitive personal property. It did not (1) maintain an annual physical inventory of personal property, (2) follow a requirement to inventory and track all electronic equipment, and (3) record personal property in the Agency's official inventory system.
- OIG Report [13-P-0272](#), *Early Warning Report: Main EPA Headquarters Warehouse in Landover, Maryland, Requires Immediate EPA Attention*, issued May 31, 2013. We found that the warehouse recordkeeping system was incomplete and inaccurate. The system did not accurately reflect the contents, condition, location, or dollar value of new or surplus items stored in the warehouse.
- OIG Report [11-P-0705](#), *EPA's Contract Oversight and Controls over Personal Computers Need Improvement*, issued September 26, 2011. We found that the EPA did not safeguard and track personal computers to ensure proper replacement and disposal in accordance with property regulations. The EPA was unable to account for 638 personal computers valued at over \$1 million.

Results

Two of the three EPA offices that we audited, the DSSD and Region 6 Mission Support Division, did not have fully developed and Agency-approved operating procedures for personal property management, as required by the *Personal Property Manual*. The manual requires all program and regional offices to establish formal processes and controls to ensure all personal property assets are handled according to

all laws, regulations, and EPA policy. The manual also requires that the agency property management officer approve each office's personal property operating procedures. The DSSD and Region 6 subsequently updated their operating procedures and received approval from the agency property management officer.

Two of the three EPA offices that we audited, the DSSD and Region 4 Mission Support Division, had sufficient controls to account for and secure laptops within their possession to prevent theft and misplacement. Their controls complied with *Personal Property Manual* requirements including implementing controls to properly account for personal property, designating key property personnel to maintain accurate records of laptop inventory, and storing laptops in secure locations.

The Region 6 Mission Support Division had sufficient controls to secure laptops in its possession. However, we identified a deficiency in its business practices to sufficiently account for new laptops received. It did not account for two (17 percent) of the 12 laptops it received in January 2022 for more than 160 days in the Agency asset management system. Once we brought this issue to the attention of Region 6 property management staff, they took immediate action to implement an additional control to further improve its accountability for new laptops received.

EPA Standard Operating Procedures on Personal Property Management Needed Further Development

The EPA Took Actions to Further Develop Standard Operating Procedures on Personal Property Management Operating Procedures

The DSSD and Region 6 did not have fully developed and approved operating procedures for personal property management as required by the *Personal Property Manual*. As a result of our audit, however, they established operating procedures to comply with *Personal Property Manual* requirements including standardized processes for receiving, accounting for, and securing purchased assets and providing guidance to property personnel to perform personal property management duties.

The DSSD provided us with the following operating procedures, guidance, and approvals as evidence that it addressed our finding:

- A standard operating procedure on personal property management titled *End User Services Computer Technology Asset Management Process Controlled Quality Management Document*, dated May 18, 2022.
- The director-approved version of the *End User Services Computer Technology Asset Management Process Controlled Quality Management Document*, which became effective July 3, 2022.
- A December 16, 2022 memorandum from the Office of Mission Support acting senior resource official directing the DSSD to obtain documented approval from the agency property management officer for all future supplemental personal property instructions, procedures, and

guidance prior to issuance to ensure compliance with federal and EPA personal property management requirements.

- Approval by the agency property management officer on March 13, 2023, of its *End User Services Computer Technology Asset Management Process Controlled Quality Management Document*.

The Region 6 Mission Support Division provided us with the following operating procedures, guidance, and approvals as evidence that it addressed our finding:

- A personal property management document, *Standard Operating Procedure-New Laptop Receipt at Region 6*, dated May 24, 2022.
- *An Internal Standard Operating Procedure-Processing Purchase Orders (POs) through Receiving*, dated June 15, 2022, which outlines procedural steps to inspect, tag, and account for property items.
- An email showing that the Region 6 Mission Support Division submitted its revised property management documents to the agency property management officer on December 15, 2022.
- The agency property management officer's January 31, 2023 approval of *Region 6 Mission Support Division Internal Standard Operations Procedure-Processing Purchase Orders (POs) through Receiving*.

The EPA Has Procedures to Account for Laptops but Further Improvements Were Needed

The *Personal Property Manual* requires EPA offices to account for property considered sensitive, such as laptops, regardless of the item's cost. The manual holds the property accountable officer within each EPA office responsible to properly identify property within their assigned area, create an inventory record within the Agency asset management system to assume stewardship of the property, and conduct periodic inventory checks to maintain an accurate account of items within its possession. The DSSD and Regions 4 and 6 Mission Support Divisions conduct multiple activities to account for laptops, including:

- Reconciling laptops ordered with quantities delivered.
- Affixing the EPA property decal on the laptop to designate ownership.



EPA property decal affixed on laptop. (EPA OIG photo)

- Creating a property record for each laptop in the Agency asset management system to promote stewardship.
- Conducting periodic inventory of laptops within their possession.
- Identifying any potential inventory shortages.

The next sections provide further details on Region 6, DSSD, and Region 4 procedures that we assessed to determine whether they had sufficient controls in place to account for laptops within their respective office.

Region 6 Procedures to Account for Laptops Needed Further Improvement

During our audit, we identified a deficiency with Region 6's business practices to account for laptops when it received two shipments for a total of 12 laptops. Specifically, two (17 percent) of the 12 laptops that Region 6 help desk technical support received in January 2022 were not accounted for in the Agency asset management system until July 2022, approximately 160 days after receipt. These two laptops were valued at \$3,086 total. The *Personal Property Manual* requires the property accountable officer to record assets in the Agency asset management system within five business days of receipt.

This deficiency occurred because the Region 6 Mission Support Division required help desk technical support to email only the Region 6 property accountable officer when it received new laptops. The property accountable officer was on extended leave so the Region 6 Mission Support Division was not aware of the shipment, leaving two laptops unaccounted for in the Agency asset management system. As a result of our audit, Region 6 took immediate actions to remediate this deficiency. The Region 6 Mission Support Division created an inventory support mail group that the help desk technical support team can use to notify the Region 6 property accountable officer, the backup property accountable officer, and Region 6 Mission Support management when it receives new laptops. This new control will provide more awareness to Region 6 Mission Support personnel when laptops are received and reasonable assurance that all laptops will be promptly accounted for in the Agency asset management system.

The Region 6 procurement team coordinates with the vendor to establish a delivery date for purchased laptops. The confirmed delivery date is communicated with Region 6 information technology services contractor staff to coordinate on-site receipt. The help desk contract support group conducts weekly inventory of laptops and reports the information to the Region 6 information technology management. We noted during our observation of the delivery of laptops on July 1, 2022, that:

- Pallets of wrapped and intact laptops were temporarily staged in the hallway outside of the information technology help desk space. One staff member remained with the pallets until all laptops were relocated within the help desk office space.
- Contract personnel affixed the EPA property decal, scanned the decal and the laptop's serial number, and entered that information in a spreadsheet.

- Contract personnel forwarded the spreadsheet to the Region 6 property accountable officer.
- The property accountable officer received the shipping invoice and reconciled the information with the purchase order.
- The property accountable officer created property records in the Agency asset management system for each laptop.

Based on the actions taken by Region 6 to address our finding and through our observations of Region 6 personnel accounting for laptops, we concluded that Region 6 procedures complied with the *Personal Property Manual* regarding accounting for property. Specifically, Region 6 affixed a decal on each item, created a property record for each laptop in the Agency asset management system to denote ownership, and conducted periodic inventories to maintain an accurate count of laptops within its possession. Therefore, we concluded that Region 6 has implemented sufficient controls to account for laptops within its possession to prevent misplacement.

DSSD Procedures to Account for Laptops

EPA property contract personnel at the EPA's warehouse in Landover inventory each laptop, affix the EPA property decal sticker on the laptop to denote ownership, and create a property record within the Agency asset management system. The DSSD's custodial officer submits a laptop request via email to the warehouse personnel, who deliver the requested laptops to headquarters. The DSSD's asset and inventory contractors:

- Scan the decals on the laptops to verify that the information is consistent with a delivery email notice from the warehouse staff.
- Enter laptop descriptive information, including model number, serial number, laptop location, date received, and custodial officer, in eBusiness, a web-based application that can track purchase orders and generate inventory reports by office.

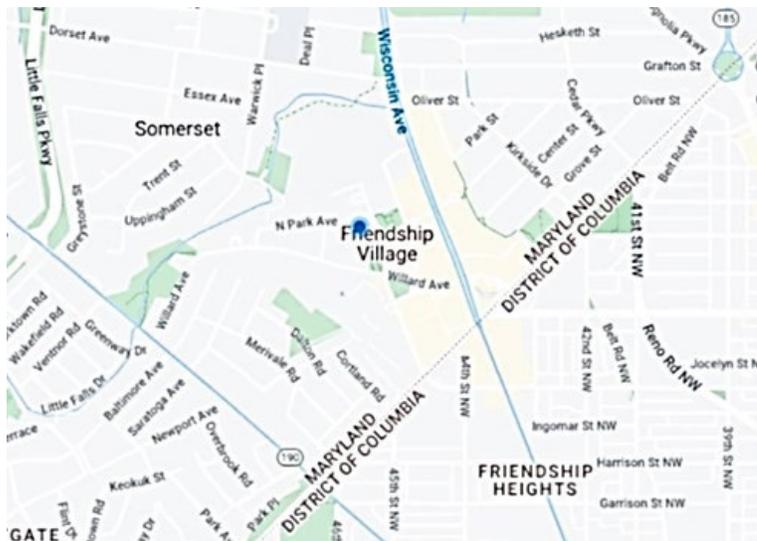
The DSSD's property custodial officer checks the property records in the Agency asset management system to verify that the new laptops are with DSSD. The DSSD's inventory contractors conduct a weekly inventory of laptops in their possession by comparing laptops in the inventory system to laptops on hand. The DSSD property management staff and contractors meet weekly to discuss any discrepancies with the inventory and actions needed to resolve issues.

We observed the DSSD's asset and inventory contractors install tracking software on the laptops. The tracking software has designated data fields for the contractor to enter information, such as the serial number, to track the location of the laptop. For the 11 laptops with tracking software, we observed the contractor enter the serial number in the designated data field. After that information was entered, a map with street names appeared with an icon designating the location of the laptop, as seen in Figure 2. Other data fields within the tracking software populated other descriptive information such as the

physical address where the laptop was located and the last time the laptop was connected to the network.

Our audit on some of the laptops delivered to the DSSD revealed that the DSSD properly accounted for each laptop. Our observations confirmed that DSSD's procedures complied with the *Personal Property Manual* regarding accounting for property. Specifically, Region 6 affixed a decal on each item, created a property record for each laptop in the Agency asset management system to denote ownership, and conducted periodic inventories to maintain an accurate count of laptops within its possession. Therefore, we concluded that the DSSD had sufficient controls to account for laptops within its possession to prevent misplacement.

Figure 2: Tracking software identifies location of EPA laptop



Note: The blue dot in the map denotes the location of an EPA laptop.
Source: EPA tracking software. (EPA image)

Region 4 Procedures to Account for Laptops

Region 4 personal property standard operating procedures include control activities to account for laptops. The procedures define property personnel roles and responsibilities and state that the:

- Region 4 property accountable officer and custodial officer are required to compare purchase requests with delivery documentation to confirm items ordered are consistent with items received.
- Region 4 property management team affixes the required EPA property decals on each laptop.
- Region 4 property accountable officer adjusts the property records in the Agency asset management system when laptops are delivered and assigned to a user's custodial officer.

Based on the information provided by Region 4, we concluded that Region 4 procedures provide sufficient details to comply with the *Personal Property Manual* regarding accounting for property. Specifically, Region 6 affixed a decal on each item and denoted ownership of each laptop in the Agency asset management system. Therefore, we concluded that Region 4 had sufficient controls to account for laptops within their possession to prevent misplacement.

The EPA Has Physical Security Controls in Place to Secure Laptops

We found that each audited location has physical security controls in place to control access to its respective laptop inventory. The *Personal Property Manual* requires safeguards to protect property against loss, theft, damage, and destruction. The manual states that “Access to storage areas shall be controlled to the least number of authorized personnel as practical.” The next sections provide further details on DSSD and Regions 4 and 6 Mission Support Divisions’ physical security controls that we assessed to determine whether they had sufficient controls in place to secure laptops within their respective office.

Description of DSSD Physical Security Controls

Our observations revealed that there are two physical security controls at the main entry door to the asset and inventory contractor’s office—a proximity card reader and cameras in the ceiling.

The office has a computer where all visitors are required to sign in when entering the main office area. The DSSD’s asset and inventory contractors secure laptops in a locked storage room next to the asset manager’s office; the asset manager maintains the key. To retrieve laptops from the storage room, DSSD procedures require that two DSSD asset and inventory contractors sign in on a log sheet to enforce inventory accountability and track how many laptops were removed. The contractors can enter the storage room from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays, per DSSD procedures. The asset and inventory contractors use a separate, secure room, which is restricted to DSSD contract technicians via a proximity card reader, to prepare the laptop to be issued to a user. We concluded that the DSSD had sufficient controls to secure for laptops within its possession to prevent theft.

Description of Region 4 Physical Security Controls

Our review of documentation and meetings with the Region 4 Mission Support Division revealed that:

- The locked storage cabinets containing laptops are restricted to Region 4 help-desk contractors and designated EPA employees.
- The help-desk contractors maintain visitor log sheets to track who visited the help-desk room.

Based on the information Region 4 provided, we concluded that Region 4 personnel had sufficient controls to secure laptops within their possession to prevent theft.

Description of Region 6 Physical Security Controls

Our observations revealed that there are several physical security controls that limit access to the laptops maintained in the technical support office. A proximity card reader and a camera are located outside the main door. Within the technical support office, there are additional physical security controls, including a camera monitoring the storage room and locked file cabinets. The technical support personnel maintain the key to the file cabinet. We concluded that Region 6 had sufficient controls to secure laptops within its possession to prevent theft.

Key Terminology

A **proximity card reader** is an access control panel typically placed near doors to restrict access to only authorized personnel. The control panel reads information stored on the card regarding the type of access the individual has to determine whether the individual should be granted or denied access to certain buildings and rooms.



From left to right: A proximity card reader. Proximity card reader and cameras at main entry. (EPA OIG photos)

Conclusions

Based on the corrective actions that the DSSD and Region 6 Mission Support Division have taken, the EPA has established sufficient controls to further improve its personal property accountability in compliance with EPA requirements. It remains paramount that the EPA continues to execute processes with controls that (1) enforce its stewardship of laptops and (2) safeguard against activities that could prevent the EPA from protecting these assets from loss, theft, and mismanagement.

Because the DSSD and Region 6 have taken corrective actions to address our findings, we make no recommendations in this report.

On October 17, 2023, the Office of Mission Support as well as Regions 4 and 6 informed us that they would not be providing a written response to our draft report issued on September 25, 2023.

Distribution

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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