

# The Social Security Administration's Process to Identify and Monitor the Security of Hardware Devices Connected to its Network

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Office of Audit Report Summary

### Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration's (SSA) process for identifying and monitoring hardware devices connected to its network effectively differentiated unapproved devices and ensured devices were at a reasonable system security level.

### Background

SSA's Fiscal Year 2012 *Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002* report stated that its automated processes identified 276,165 hardware devices connected to its network. SSA uses automated tools to provide the Department of Homeland Security with security metrics. The metrics include the number of hardware devices connected to the network, whether there are secure configuration baselines, and the number of certain security incidents detected.

We selected a sample of hardware devices identified by the Agency's network scanning tool to determine whether SSA approved these devices and the devices were operating at a reasonable system security level.

### Our Findings

While the Agency has a process to identify hardware devices connected to its network, we determined the Agency's inventory was incomplete and inaccurate. Additionally, SSA did not approve all of the hardware devices connected to its network. Moreover, although SSA has processes to monitor the security level of connected devices, these processes were inconsistent with Agency policy in effect at the time of our audit.

### Our Recommendations

We recommend the Agency:

1. Pursue implementing systems, through a risk-based process, to ensure only approved and security-compliant hardware devices are connected to its network.
2. Revise its policy to document who or which Agency component manages each hardware device connected to its network and is responsible for adequately securing these devices. The policy should better describe and define roles and responsibilities for monitoring security levels for all hardware devices.
3. Ensure hardware devices identified in this audit are at a reasonable security level.

SSA agreed with our recommendations.