



SSA fails to E-Verify 19 percent of new hires, IG says

The Social Security Administration did not screen 1,767 workers in the E-Verify system as required

By [Alice Lipowicz](#)

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The Social Security Administration failed to perform required verifications of the Social Security numbers of 19 percent of its own new hires during a recent 18-month period, according to [a new report](#) from the agency's inspector general, Patrick O'Carroll Jr.

The SSA also improperly screened the identities of 75 volunteers, job candidates and existing employees and was either too early or too late in verifying the eligibility of 49 percent of its new hires, according to the audit of Jan. 6.

SSA officials asked to review some of the findings with the IG, and agreed with all the recommendations for improvements.

The SSA supports the Homeland Security Administration in operating the E-Verify employment verification system. Under the system, employers submit employee Social Security numbers for verification of eligibility to work in the United States. The program has been controversial due to errors in the federal databases involved and [the lack of protections against identity theft](#) in the system.

E-Verify is currently voluntary except for federal agencies, which have been required to use it since 2007, and for federal contractors, whose requirement to use E-Verify went into effect in September 2009.

According to the IG's audit, the SSA hired 9,311 new employees in fiscal 2008 through March 31, 2009, for whom employment eligibility verification through E-Verify was required.

Of the new hires, SSA did not use E-Verify for 19 percent, or 1,767 persons. When the IG reviewed those 1,767 individuals, it determined that 44 of them would have received initial denials of eligibility from E-Verify, the report said.

Furthermore, SSA improperly submitted to E-Verify the Social Security numbers of 18 job candidates, 26 existing SSA employees and 31 volunteers, the report said. None of those groups should have been screened by E-Verify under federal guidelines.

The E-Verify guidelines also mandate that the screening must occur in seven days after the employee is hired. Agencies are not allowed to use E-Verify as a pre-hiring screening tool. For the 7,544 new hires that were screened through E-Verify at SSA, 25 percent were screened inappropriately before the hire date, and 24 percent were screened inappropriately eight days or later after the hire date, the audit said.

The IG recommended that SSA verify the eligibility for the 1,767 new hires and provide more training for SSA screening employees to understand the guidelines.

“We believe SSA needs to set an example for federal agencies when using E-Verify by making sure all new hires are verified to help maintain a legal workforce, and improve the accuracy of wage and tax reporting. In addition, the agency needs to ensure it complies with all the E-Verify requirements related to existing employees and job candidates,” O’Carroll wrote.

About the Author

Alice Lipowicz is a staff writer for Federal Computer Week.