

Changes to Social Security Number Issuance Have Begun

SSN Randomization means closer attention is needed for all SSN verification purposes

A Big Change Has Occurred

W-4s will now have SSNs beginning with a number that employers didn't expect to see.

Applicants will be using SSNs that cannot be traced back to the state of issuance.

Tweet

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var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];  
s.type = 'text/javascript';  
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';  
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);  
})();
```

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has changed the way Social Security Numbers (SSNs) are issued. This change is referred to as "randomization." On July 3, 2007, the SSA published its intent to randomize the nine-digit SSN in the Federal Register Notice, Protecting the Integrity of Social Security Numbers [Docket No. SSA 2007-0046].

The date for SSN Randomization was announced as June 25, 2011 to coincide with the start of the third quarter and software updates. The SSA developed this new method to extend the longevity of SSNs in all states.

How it All Began

The SSA began assigning the nine-digit SSN in 1936 for the purpose of tracking workers' earnings over the course of their lifetimes to pay benefits. Since its inception, the SSN has always been comprised of the three-digit area number, followed by the two-digit group number, and ending with the four-digit serial number.

SSNs were never intended to be a national identifier but that is exactly what they have become. SSNs were created for wage and tax reporting purposes only.

There are approximately 420 million numbers available for assignment. However, the current SSN assignment process limits the number of SSNs that are available for issuance to individuals by each state.

It's All in The Numbers

SSN Randomization will affect the SSN assignment process in the following ways:

• It will eliminate the geographical significance of the first three digits of the SSN by no longer allocating the area numbers for assignment to individuals in specific states.

- It will eliminate the significance of the highest group number and, as a result, the High Group List will be frozen in time and can only be used for validation of SSNs issued prior to the randomization implementation date.

- Previously unassigned area numbers will be introduced for assignment (070 and 080 in the first position) except area numbers 000, 666 and 900-999.

Using these ranges of numbers will allow SSA to continue issuing SSNs for approximately the next 30 years without making any changes, but these changes to the SSN may require systems and/or business process updates to accommodate SSN Randomization.

Who Gets a Randomized SSN?

Over 95% of new SSN cards issued each year are to newborns – this is the SSA Enumeration at Birth process. But now there are adults with randomized SSNs:

• Legal immigrants will receive a randomized SSN

• Victims of domestic violence can request a new SSN

• Victims of Identity Theft can request a new SSN (although issuance of a new number is rare in these cases)

• Criminals will continue to exploit the system

And, under the following circumstances, the SSA may assign a different number:

- Sequential numbers assigned to members of the same family are causing problems

- More than one person is using the same number

- An individual has religious or cultural objections to certain numbers or digits in the original number

- A victim of identity theft continues to be disadvantaged by using the original number

- Situations of harassment, abuse or life endangerment (including domestic violence)

Help For Businesses

Because SSN Trace algorithms will no longer be useful and some old methods of verification will be obsolete, it's more important than ever for businesses to use Consent Based Social Security Number Verification (CBSV) service from the Social Security Administration to mitigate fraud and identity theft and its associated losses.

CBSV protects vital interests by thwarting any SSN scam that criminals will attempt to perpetrate.

Guest posting by Chuck Salvia of CID, LLC

Computer Information Development LLC (CID LLC), an enrolled company in the CBSV service, provides instant online results for your verification needs direct from the governmental source. Visit www.idvalidation.net for details.

(Source: IDValidation.net and ssa.gov/employer/randomization.html)

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