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Meeting information security responsibilities under the GISRA Law

By Bill Hornish, Director of Information Assurance, STG, Inc.

Information protection is a major component of Homeland Security. More than ever, federal agencies need to focus on securing their assets. Even prior to the recent push for increased security, the government has been encouraging federal managers to protect themselves through the Government Information Security Reform Act (GISRA).

GISRA requires federal agencies to assess the security of their non-classified information systems. More importantly, from an enforcement perspective, the law requires every agency to provide risk assessment and report the security needs of all systems. This can be overwhelming to agencies that have little time or minimal budget for GISRA compliance. Nevertheless, these reports must be included in every agency budget request to receive funding approval.

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Managing Workers' Compensation benefits in your organization

Recent headlines have noted a growing concern that workers' compensation benefits for federal employees are overly generous compared with benefits for private sector workers. The fear is that these benefits, while necessary, have become so generous that employees may easily abuse them.

The Bush Administration has proposed reforms to address this particular issue. But while changes in federal workers' compensation policy is in the planning stages, there are a few things that federal managers can incorporate into their management activities to minimize abuse of these benefits.



Chuck Howe of US Investigations/USIS, one of FedSource's key vendors, stresses the importance that management remain an active participant in the lives of their injured workers. Some suggestions include:

- **Stay in close contact with employees receiving workers' compensation benefits.** For example, establish programs where a human resources representative or co-workers make home visits or weekly phone calls just to touch base.
- **Ensure workers know they are a valuable resource – not just a statistic.**
- **Take an aggressive stance.** Establish hotlines where employees can report co-workers' noncompliance as a deterrent for those workers who may abuse the system.



- **If an incident occurs, be concerned.** Run safety assessments of the workplace and perform preventative measures to reduce the risk of a repeat event.

If you have any questions regarding workers' compensation, how it affects you and your organization, or the proposed policy changes, please contact FedSource.

Workers' Compensation proposed reforms

- Federal workers on disability for the rest of their lives would see their benefits reduced at age 65 to meet the standard federal retirement benefits.
- A waiting period, similar to state waiting periods, would be required for federal workers with work-related injuries that keep them off the job for 14 days or less.
- Agencies would be required to pay a surcharge on workers' compensation benefits to cover program administration costs.
- Workers' compensation claims would be subject to closer scrutiny to prevent overpayments.

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To assist agencies in meeting GISRA requirements, industry partners such as FedSource vendor STG, Inc. have developed cost-effective service packages that include key GISRA compliance tools. These tools provide access to highly trained personnel including specialized security engineers and analysts. By utilizing these resources, agencies can spend limited dollars more efficiently, and standardize reporting so it's easier to summarize at the agency level. This is particularly beneficial as the Office of Management and Budget has ascertained that an agency spending more on security does not necessarily equate to more secure resources.



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For more information to ensure your organization is meeting GISRA responsibilities, please contact your local FedSource office.

Uncovering recovery auditing: A guide for federal managers

The recently passed fiscal 2002 Defense Authorization Act now requires federal agencies to use recovery auditing methods to identify and track overpayments to contractors. But while the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) develops guidelines for using such services, federal managers may feel a bit lost.

Paul Dinkins, Executive Vice President of PRG-Schultz International, Inc., has provided some general information to help federal managers get a grasp on the subject. Following is a description of recovery auditing and its benefits as well as some tips to get started and pricing information.



What is recovery auditing?

Recovery auditing is a specialized professional service used to identify and recover overpayments or under-deductions inadvertently made to contractors or vendors. Companies began using it more than 30 years ago, helping them save millions of dollars.

It is not an exercise in fault finding. Every purchase and bill-paying organization, no matter the size or quality, experiences these problems – including government agencies. It's simply a tool to achieve maximum efficiency.

The benefits

Recovery auditing is a proven method for ensuring the best financial management practices are brought to bear for federal agencies and that taxpayers' money is being used as efficiently as possible. It's truly a win-win as federal agencies can reallocate the money they “find” for other mission-critical initiatives.

Getting started

1. Select a vendor to conduct the recovery auditing. This allows the agency to concentrate on its core mission.
2. Consult the vendor before going to a contracting officer. Often they will check to make sure there is an overage before you move forward.
3. Once a manager feels there is a problem and documentation can be provided, they can go to the finance office to begin the process of collecting the erred money.
4. Traditionally, most recovery auditing is conducted on an annual basis. However, it's ideal to conduct them on a “real time” basis, so agencies can reallocate the monies as soon as possible.

Cost

Of course, the next question is most likely, “how much will this cost?” The answer is simple. Recovery auditing is predicated on contingency fees. This means the vendor works for a percentage of the money that is recovered. And if no money is recovered, then nothing is owed to the vendor.

As an additional bonus, the same legislation that mandates agencies to conduct recovery auditing, provides some incentives to do so. Specifically, it allows agencies to be reimbursed any expenses and program fees needed to implement the recovery auditing process from the collected funds.

Dinkins recommends that once an agency is ready to move forward with recovery auditing they should work through a third-party source to identify potential vendors. Organizations such as FedSource are ideal, because they handle everything including competitive bidding, while meeting FAR requirements. To find out more about starting a recovery audit program for your agency, visit FedSource's Web site at www.fedsource.gov.