



U.S. Department of Energy  
Office of Inspector General  
Office of Inspections and Special Inquiries

# Inspection Report

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Property Control and Accountability at  
the Idaho National Laboratory

DOE/IG-0687

April 2005



## Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

April 28, 2005

### MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

FROM:

  
Gregory H. Friedman  
Inspector General

SUBJECT:

INFORMATION: Inspection Report on "Property Control and Accountability at the Idaho National Laboratory"

### BACKGROUND

In 2004, the Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory (INL) had a personal property inventory of approximately 78,000 items with an acquisition value of \$550 million. The inventory included general property and a significant number of items designated as "sensitive property." Sensitive property includes computers, photographic equipment, and other equipment that is susceptible to being appropriated for personal use. The contractor operating INL was contractually obligated to establish an approved property management system for the control, utilization, maintenance, repair, protection, preservation, and disposition of Government property and was to provide for end user employee personal responsibility and accountability for Government owned property.

The objective of our inspection was to determine if the operating contractor had established and implemented adequate internal controls to ensure Government property was protected from loss or theft.

### RESULTS OF INSPECTION

Department of Energy property management requirements were met by INL based on its ability to appropriately account for 98 percent of inventoried property. This is a positive finding. However, in the last 3 fiscal years, INL recorded as missing 998 items of Government property with an acquisition cost of approximately \$2.2 million. Subsequently, these items were "retired" from the Laboratory's system of accountability. During our inspection, we identified property controls that could be improved, potentially resulting in a reduction in the number and impact of incidents of missing property. Specifically:

- There were inadequate controls over excess property while it accumulated in staging areas and when it was transported to the excess property warehouse;
- Approximately 269 computers and computer disc drives storing unknown types of information were missing, creating the potential for the loss of sensitive unclassified information;
- End user failure to comply with property management procedures resulted in the loss of Government property, but end users were not held accountable; and



- Investigations of missing or stolen property at INL may not have been effective as a result of competing priorities for investigative staff, untimely reporting to investigative staff, and reporting shortcomings.

Effective February 1, 2005, a new contractor assumed responsibility for the operation of INL. We believe the issues raised in this report can be addressed as part of the new INL contract. We made several recommendations to the Manager of the Idaho Operations Office designed to enhance property controls at the site.

### MANAGEMENT REACTION

In responding to a draft of this report, the Manager of the Idaho Operations Office concurred with our recommendations and identified corrective actions that have been taken or initiated. Management's comments, which are provided in their entirety in Appendix C of the report, were responsive to our recommendations.

Attachment

cc: Deputy Secretary  
Under Secretary for Energy, Science and Environment  
Director, Office of Security and Safety Performance Assurance  
Director, Office of Program Liaison and Financial Analysis

# PROPERTY CONTROL AND ACCOUNTABILITY AT THE IDAHO NATIONAL LABORATORY

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# Overview

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## INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE

The Department of Energy's (DOE's) Idaho National Laboratory (INL) couples scientific and engineering expertise with unique facilities and operations to execute DOE missions. These missions include addressing the environmental legacy of the Cold War; ensuring a secure, reliable, and sustainable national energy infrastructure; supporting national security programs; and contributing to the leadership in science, technology, and innovation. INL was operated by Bechtel BWXT Idaho, LLC (BBWI), until February 1, 2005. Oversight of INL operations is provided by DOE's Idaho Operations Office.

BBWI's contract with DOE included, among other responsibilities, the management of Government owned property at INL. This included a large inventory of sensitive property, such as computers and photographic equipment, that is susceptible to being appropriated for personal use or that can be readily converted to cash. According to its contract, BBWI was to establish an approved property management system for the control, utilization, maintenance, repair, protection, preservation, and disposition of Government property and was to provide for end user employee personal responsibility and accountability for Government owned property. In the last 3 fiscal years, BBWI recorded 998 items of Government property with an acquisition cost of approximately \$2.2 million as missing and subsequently "retired" from property accountability.<sup>1</sup> As depicted in Figure 1, the majority of missing property at INL was computer related equipment.

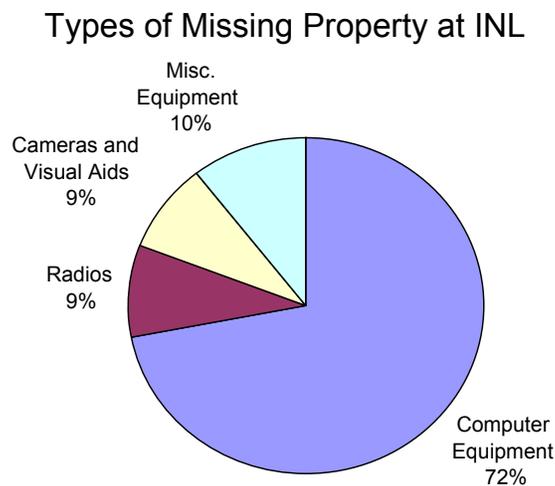


Figure 1

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<sup>1</sup> We were advised by the DOE Idaho Operations Office that the "fair-market" value of these items is \$290,000.

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The objective of our inspection was to determine if BBWI had established and implemented adequate internal controls to ensure Government property was protected from loss or theft.

## **OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Although BBWI met DOE property management requirements by accounting for 98 percent of inventoried property, we concluded that property controls could be improved to reduce the number and impact of incidents of missing property. Specifically:

- There were inadequate controls over excess property while it accumulated in staging areas and when it was transported to the excess property warehouse;
- Approximately 269 computers and computer disc drives storing unknown types of information were missing, creating the potential for the loss of sensitive unclassified information;
- End user failure to comply with property management procedures resulted in the loss of Government property, but end users were not held accountable; and
- Investigations of missing or stolen property at INL may not have been effective as a result of competing priorities for investigative staff, untimely reporting to investigative staff, and reporting shortcomings.

We note that effective February 1, 2005, Battelle Energy Alliance (BEA) replaced BBWI as the management contractor at INL. We believe the issues raised in this report need to be addressed as part of the new INL contract in order to ensure that they are resolved in an appropriate and timely manner.

This inspection complements similar work performed by the Office of Inspector General at other DOE sites. A list of the associated reports is found at Appendix B.

## Details of Findings

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### **EXCESS PROPERTY PROCESS**

We found that there were inadequate controls over excess property while it accumulated in staging areas and when it was transported to the excess property warehouse. Specifically, staging areas for excess property were not well secured, and excess property in the staging areas often lacked required excess property paperwork. These conditions, combined with a lack of documentation showing a change in custody when excess property was picked up and transported to the excess property warehouse, resulted in a loss of control and accountability over excess property.

According to BBWI policy, it was the responsibility of the end user to determine if Government property was to be excessed. Once a determination was made to excess a property item, the end user was required to complete an Excess Property Report, attach the report to the property, and forward a copy of the report to BBWI Property Management. It was the end user's responsibility to make arrangements and pay for transporting the property to the excess property warehouse. Therefore, excess property waiting to be transported to the excess property warehouse was often placed in staging areas and allowed to accumulate since it was more economical to transport a large number of items. BBWI truck drivers picked up the items from the staging areas and transported the items to the excess property warehouse.

During our inspection, we visited an excess property staging area. It was an open hallway near the rear of the building that was stacked with a large amount of property (see picture 1). The types of property included lasers and laboratory equipment. We noted that only a few items had the required Excess Property Report attached to them; many items had no accompanying paperwork or custodial identification.

In reviewing INL lost property reports, we found frequent references to property being lost during the excessing process. BBWI personnel told us that some of the property reported as lost during the excessing process could be attributed to employees removing property from staging areas for reuse within INL without completing the required property transfer form. At the staging area we visited, we observed that unguarded building exit doors were within close proximity of the staging area, allowing for easy unauthorized removal of property.



EXAMPLE OF AN INL EXCESS PROPERTY STAGING AREA

Picture 1

In addition, when BBWI truck drivers picked up excess property from the staging areas, they were not required to sign for or complete any type of inventory list for the property. We noted that in the past several years two BBWI employees were convicted of the theft of Government property from INL, one of whom was a BBWI truck driver who picked up excess computer equipment.

## **CONTROL OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION**

We found that, of the 998<sup>2</sup> items of Government owned property reported as missing from INL, approximately 269 of those items were computers and computer disc drives storing unknown types of information, creating the potential for the loss of sensitive unclassified information.

BBWI had an established process specific to excessing INL computers and computer related peripheral equipment. There was a Personal Computer (PC) Redistribution Center physically located in the excess property warehouse. However, the PC redistribution function was separate from the excess property function and was under a different BBWI manager. End users were required to send excess computer equipment to the PC Redistribution Center, where it was evaluated for redistribution within the INL/DOE complex, donation to non-profit organizations, or sale as surplus equipment.

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<sup>2</sup> According to BBWI Property Management officials, this number is subject to change as items are found or new items are determined to be missing.

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Excess computer equipment was commonly left in staging areas along with other excess equipment awaiting transportation to the excess property warehouse and the PC Redistribution Center, as shown in Picture 2.



EXAMPLE OF EXCESS COMPUTER EQUIPMENT

Picture 2

This exposed the computer equipment to the same accountability issues discussed previously in connection with other excess property. In reviewing missing property records for the last three fiscal years, we found numerous references to computer equipment being sent to the PC Redistribution Center, with no records at the center showing the equipment as having been received or processed.

The large number of missing computers and computer disc drives raised concerns about the type of information that might be contained on those items, such as export controlled or other sensitive information. We interviewed several managers and supervisors concerning the types of information contained on the missing computers and the disc drives. We were told that none of the missing computers or disc drives was authorized to process classified information but that there was a possibility some of them contained export controlled or other sensitive information. However, there was no way for us to determine with certainty what information was on the missing computers and disc drives. We noted that the PC Redistribution Center's procedures stated that

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computer disc drives would be sanitized or removed by its personnel prior to redistribution, donation, or sale, but we could find no evidence that the 269 missing computers and computer disc drives were ever sanitized.

## **END USER ACCOUNTABILITY**

We found that end user failure to comply with property management procedures resulted in the loss of Government property, but end users were not held accountable. BBWI property management procedures required end users to complete appropriate property management forms when the custody, location, or status of Government property changed. Further, BBWI's contract required BBWI to maintain "employee personal responsibility and accountability for Government owned property." We determined that some of the unaccounted for property at INL was the result of end users not documenting changes in the custody, location, or status of property; however, end users were not held accountable for the property.

A number of BBWI personnel told us that some of the unaccounted for property at INL was the result of end users not documenting changes in the custody, location, or status of property. We identified an example involving the reported loss of three moisture density gauges in 2000 that were written-off by BBWI Property Management as unlocated and retired in 2002. These gauges contained radioactive sources, so the end user was required to follow special DOE reporting procedures if they were lost. However, there was no mention in the missing property reports that DOE special reporting procedures were followed by the end user. Further, as a result of our inspection activity, additional inquiries were conducted by the DOE Idaho Operations Office and BBWI officials, and it was revealed that the three detectors were, in fact, not actually lost. They had been in the possession of an employee who was not assigned as the end user, and that person had returned them to the manufacturer in 2004 without the knowledge of the assigned end user or BBWI Property Management.

Also, according to BBWI officials, in a number of cases personnel who had left their INL positions, frequently as a result of their project(s) ending, did not account for their assigned Government property prior to their departure. They further said that during the succeeding annual inventory process some newly assigned employees would be tasked to reconcile large lists of property that had been assigned to former employees. In many instances, the property lists contained items that had never been seen or used by the newly assigned employees, yet it became their responsibility to

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try to account for the property. Subsequently, some items could not be located.

In addition, our review of the 998 items of Government property reported missing and retired over the last 3 fiscal years found that certain end users were responsible for multiple items of missing property. For example, as shown in Figure 2, five employees alone were responsible for missing property with an acquisition cost of over \$400,000.

#### MISSING PROPERTY

EMPLOYEE	QUANTITY MISSING	ACQUISITION COST
A	68	\$188,187
B	20	\$80,498
C	8	\$49,210
D	8	\$42,454
E	14	\$45,070

Figure 2

However, we found no evidence of any end users being held accountable for the loss of Government property. Specifically, we did not find any documentation showing that end users were being held accountable for the loss of Government property. Further, BBWI officials and DOE site personnel we interviewed could not recall any personal consequences, such as payment of restitution, adverse personnel action, or a derogatory performance evaluation, resulting from an end user not properly controlling and accounting for Government property. Several managers we interviewed said they favored taking personnel action against employees for the loss of Government property. However, we were told, and it was consistent with our observations, that improvements in the excess property and computer redistribution functions were needed in order for managers to hold employees accountable for the loss of Government property.

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**INVESTIGATION OF MISSING AND STOLEN PROPERTY**

We found that investigations of missing or stolen property at INL may not have been effective as a result of competing priorities for investigative staff, untimely reporting to investigative staff, and reporting shortcomings. BBWI employed two full-time investigators who were involved in the investigation of criminal and security related issues at INL. We were told that less than 10 percent of their time was spent investigating reports of missing property; about 90 percent of their time was dedicated to facilitating DOE security incident reporting requirements and investigating alleged criminal activity.

The investigators received approximately 50 to 60 missing property reports a month. These reports were often received more than two months after the property was reported missing, making it difficult to conduct a timely investigation. Compounding this problem was the fact that many items of missing property, including computers that may have contained sensitive information, were reported missing as a result of the annual inventory process, so the property may have been missing for an extended period of time.

We were also told that many of the items initially reported as missing were later found and that it was very difficult for the investigators to prioritize items that were possibly stolen versus those items that were simply misplaced. It was pointed out to us that the BBWI missing property form did not contain a place for the reporting person to indicate his or her belief that the loss was specifically related to a theft, thereby making it more difficult for the investigators to discern missing property from suspected stolen property. Further, we noted that the form did not contain a specific place for the reporting person to identify whether sensitive information was or might be associated with the item of missing property.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

We recommend that the Manager, Idaho Operations Office, direct the management contractor to:

1. Ensure that accountability and chain of custody of Government property is maintained during the staging and transportation of excess property.
2. Ensure that accountability and chain of custody are maintained throughout the PC disposition process.

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3. Hold employees accountable when they do not comply with DOE approved property management procedures or lose Government property as a result of personal neglect.
  4. Ensure missing property reports are filed in a timely manner, and revise the missing property form to reflect whether the reporting employee believes the missing property has been stolen and whether sensitive information is or may be associated with the missing property.
  5. Conduct timely investigations of all missing property that has the potential for a security interest, such as computer memory devices or export controlled technologies, and take steps to try to recover such sensitive property.
  6. Ensure that Government property is properly accounted for prior to the ending dates for employees and/or projects.

**MANAGEMENT  
COMMENTS**

In comments on our draft report, management concurred with our recommendations and indicated that corrective actions have been taken or initiated. Management's comments are included in Appendix C in their entirety.

**INSPECTOR  
COMMENTS**

We found management's comments to be responsive to our report recommendations. Management also provided several editorial comments about specific phrasing in the draft report. We evaluated these comments, and changes were made to the report as appropriate.

## Appendix A

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### **SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

The field work for this inspection was conducted between August and September 2004. As part of this inspection, we interviewed officials from the DOE Idaho Operations Office, as well as managers, supervisors, and employees of BBWI. In addition, we:

- Reviewed DOE and BBWI policies and procedures on the management of Government property and the INL management and operating contract.
- Reviewed a judgmental sample of missing property records and reports.
- Conducted data mining on the missing property list we obtained from BBWI.
- Reviewed on-line BBWI property management training materials.
- Reviewed property records associated with three missing moisture density gauges that contained sealed radioactive materials.

Pursuant to the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), we reviewed performance measurement process information relative to the BBWI property management function at INL.

This inspection was conducted in accordance with the “Quality Standards for Inspections” issued by the President’s Council on Integrity and Efficiency.

## Appendix B

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### RELATED REPORTS

The following reports involve work similar to this inspection:

- “Internal Controls Over the Accountability of Computers at Sandia National Laboratory, New Mexico” (DOE/IG-0660, August 2004);
- “Internal Controls Over Personal Computers at Los Alamos National Laboratory” (DOE/IG-0656, August 2004);
- “Internal Controls Over Classified Computers and Classified Removable Media at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory” (DOE/IG-0628, December 2003);
- “Internal Controls Over Laptop and Desktop Computers at the Savannah River Site” (INS-L-03-09, July 2003);
- “Management of Sensitive Equipment at Selected Locations” (DOE/IG-0606, June 2003);
- “Inspection of Internal Controls Over Personal Computers at Los Alamos National Laboratory” (DOE/IG-0597, April 2003);  
and
- “Special Inquiry on Operations at the Los Alamos National Laboratory” (DOE/IG-0584, January 2003).

United States Government

Department of Energy

## memorandum

Idaho Operations Office

Date: April 1, 2005

Subject: DOE Idaho Operations Office's Comments to Draft Office of Inspector General (OIG) Inspection Report S04IS022, titled: "Property Control and Accountability at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory" (AS-RMD-FS-05-010)

To: Alfred K. Walter, Assistant Inspector General  
for Inspections and Special Inquiries  
Office of Inspector General  
DOE-HQ, IG-40/FORS

We have reviewed the subject draft report attached to the IG-40 memorandum of March 8, 2005. We generally concur with all recommendations and have developed cost-efficient action plans to correct the noted deficiencies. Comments specific to the six recommendations are attached.

We have also attached for your consideration/use, editorial comments specific to the DRAFT report. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Nicolas Nicolayeff, Audit Liaison, on (208) 526-0172.



Paul B. Keele, Acting Assistant Manager  
Administration Services

Attachment

## Appendix C (continued)

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**DOE Idaho Operations Office's Comments to  
Draft Office of Inspector General (OIG) Inspection Report S04IS022  
"Property Control and Accountability at the  
Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory "**

**Editorial Comments:**

1. The statement that "BBWI recorded 998 items of Government property valued at approximately \$2.2 million as missing" is misleading. In fact, in accordance with a July 31, 2003, memorandum, Dean Olson/Director of DOE's Office of Financial Policy, indicated that fair-market value should be used for property losses. Therefore, while the property had an original acquisition cost of approximately \$2.2 million, it has a verifiable fair-market "value" of approximately \$290,000. Therefore, we feel very strongly that the \$2.2 million value should be replaced with a value of \$290,000.
2. The "Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory" has been renamed the "Idaho National Laboratory" on February 1, 2005. It is suggested that the new name should be used in your report.
3. Page 2, paragraph 3, line 4, "part of the contract transition" should read "part of the new INL contract" as transition is already complete.
4. On page 4, paragraph 1, line 6, following "driver" - we suggest adding "that picked up excess computer equipment."
5. Page 6, paragraph 2, line 12, "and liable" should be removed. We concur in accountability, but the property clause DEAR 970.5245-1 specifically precludes liability except in very specific circumstances.
6. Page 7, paragraph 2, line 5, should have the words "of acquisition cost" after \$400,000, and the header on the third column of the table should also reflect "acquisition cost."

## Appendix C (continued)

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**DOE Idaho Operations Office's Comments to  
Draft Office of Inspector General (OIG) Inspection Report S04IS022  
"Property Control and Accountability at the  
Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory "**

**Comments Specific to Recommendations:**

Recommendation 1: That the Manager, Idaho Operations Office, direct the management contractor to ensure that accountability and chain of custody of Government property is maintained during the staging and transportation of excess property.

Management Comments: Concur. BEA, our current M&O Contractor, has committed to take the following corrective actions pertaining to this recommendation:

- Modify processes and procedures to require that Excess Property Reports be completed for Personal Computing (PC) assets. This Action has been completed.
- Modify processes and procedures to ensure that accountability and chain of custody is maintained for excess property during staging and transportation of excess property by:
  - Requiring that excess property generators retain copies of Excess Property Reports approved by the property disposal office, and other relevant documentation, until notice that property transactions reflecting receipt at the disposal facility is received.
  - Requiring that if generators of excess property do not receive notice that property transactions reflecting receipt at the disposal facility are complete within 30 days of property pickup that they notify Inventory Management of the issue.
  - Requiring that if Inventory Management is notified that a generator of excess property does not receive a notice that property transactions reflecting receipt at the disposal facility are completed that the issue be resolved and the resolution reported to the excess property generator and to the Manager of Property Management.

Projected completion date: 6/30/2005.

## Appendix C (continued)

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Recommendation 2: That the Manager, Idaho Operations Office, direct the management contractor to ensure that accountability and chain of custody are maintained through the PC disposition process.

Management Comments: Concur. BEA, our current M&O Contractor, has committed to take the following corrective actions pertaining to this recommendation:

- The corrective actions for recommendation 1 above also apply to PC assets disposition processing. 6/30/2005
- Modify the PC Asset Redistribution Process to eliminate the Information Technology department physical distribution of hardware, but retain the capability for the Information Technology department to direct reuse of assets on site.

Projected completion date: 6/30/2005.

Recommendation 3: That the Manager, Idaho Operations Office, direct the management contractor to hold employees accountable when they do not comply with DOE approved property management procedures or lose Government property as a result of personal neglect.

Management Comments: Concur. BEA, our current M&O Contractor, has committed to take the following corrective actions pertaining to this recommendation:

- The new INL contractor provided all employees the Standards of Conduct and Business Ethics booklet and obtained a written acknowledgement that each employee received the booklet. The booklet discusses use of Company and Client (Government) assets, and describes the potential penalties to employees for noncompliance.
- Implement an electronic Property Bulletin that will be periodically sent to property assigned end users and their management to increase awareness of responsibilities for property. This communication tool will be used to emphasize the importance of accurate completion of end user reports, submission of timely location changes, and other types of user/manager property activities.
- Require that Property Management periodically send reports to Division Directors notifying them of missing and damaged property reports received from personnel in their organizations.

Projected completion date: 8/30/2005

## Appendix C (continued)

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Recommendation 4: That the Manager, Idaho Operations Office, direct the management contractor to ensure missing property reports are filed in a timely manner, and revise the missing property form to reflect whether the reporting employee believes the missing property has been stolen and whether sensitive information is or may be associated with the missing property.

Management Comments: Concur. BEA, our current M&O Contractor, has committed to take the following corrective actions pertaining to this recommendation:

- Update the missing property report to provide a required entry from the originator to reflect when theft may be suspected, or when sensitive information is associated with the missing property.
- Modify process and procedures to require immediate notification to Security when theft is suspected.
- Modify processes and procedures to require that inventory management promptly notify Security when an item is reported missing is found.
- Change the contractor report of lost property to DOE to include the current depreciated value of items along with the acquisition cost.

Projected completion date: 6/30/2005

Recommendation 5: That the Manager, Idaho Operations Office, direct the management contractor to conduct timely investigations of all missing property that has the potential for a security interest, such as computer memory devices or export controlled technologies, and take steps to try to recover such sensitive property.

Management Comments: Concur. BEA, our current M&O Contractor, has committed to take the following corrective actions pertaining to this recommendation:

- INL Security will coordinate with Property Management to ensure that information pertinent to Security is included on the report of lost property.
- INL Security requires individual users to identify to INL Security any computer, which will contain sensitive information. The need to properly register this information will be re-emphasized in recurring Security education and new hire briefings.
- DOE Security will audit future investigative reports to validate compliance with internal requirements.

Projected completion date: 5/30/2005

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Recommendation 6: That the Manager, Idaho Operations Office, direct the management contractor to ensure that Government property is properly accounted for prior to the ending dates for employees and/or projects.

Management Comments: Concur. BEA, our current M&O Contractor, has committed to take the following corrective actions pertaining to this recommendation:

- Modify the INL employee termination process to require that the departing employee and the cognizant manager or supervisor complete and sign a property acknowledgement form.
- Modify processes and procedures to require Inventory Management to follow up on property transactions for employee terminations and notify the Manager of Property Management when actions are not completed in a timely manner.

Projected completion date: 6/30/2005

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1. What additional background information about the selection, scheduling, scope, or procedures of the inspection would have been helpful to the reader in understanding this report?
2. What additional information related to findings and recommendations could have been included in the report to assist management in implementing corrective actions?
3. What format, stylistic, or organizational changes might have made this report's overall message clearer to the reader?
4. What additional actions could the Office of Inspector General have taken on the issues discussed in this report which would have been helpful?
5. Please include your name and telephone number so that we may contact you should we have any questions about your comments.

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