



U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Inspector General
Office of Audit Services

Audit Report

Use and Management of Mobile Communications Services

DOE/IG-0669

December 2004




Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

December 14, 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

FROM:


Gregory H. Friedman
Inspector General

SUBJECT:

INFORMATION: Audit Report on the "Use and Management of Mobile Communications Services"

BACKGROUND

The acquisition and use of wireless or mobile communication devices for mission support, such as cellular phones and pagers, at the Department of Energy have steadily increased over the past several years. Devices are issued to a wide range of employees including senior level management officials and employees responsible for security, maintenance, weapons production, and administrative activities.

At the eight sites included in our review, the Department and its contractors have acquired and are using approximately 4,000 cellular phones and 15,000 pagers. Acquisition of all phones and pagers at these sites, which represent only a fraction of overall Department of Energy usage, increased by almost 10 percent from Fiscal Year 2002 to Fiscal Year 2003 and the cost for the use and management now amounts to about \$4.4 million per fiscal year. Because of the increasing demand in this area, we initiated this audit to determine whether the Department had effectively managed the acquisition and use of mobile communication devices and services.

RESULTS OF AUDIT

We found that the Department had only limited assurance that mobile communication devices and services were being used and managed in a cost effective manner. At three of the eight sites visited, as much as \$1.13 million annually could be saved by adopting more efficient methods for use and management of communication devices and services. Specifically, for FYs 2002 and 2003, certain Department and contractor organizations incurred:

- Costs for cellular phone and paging services that were not aligned with user needs, i.e., a number of devices or services were over or under used, or were not used at all;
- Unnecessary costs by not taking advantage of available volume usage discounts for cellular phone services; and,



- Disproportionate administrative costs equivalent to about 45 percent of cellular phone service costs.

These problems occurred because organizations did not always focus on ensuring that a valid mission need existed or on using the most efficient method for obtaining needed services.

During the course of this audit, we learned that certain Department organizations had adopted innovative acquisition approaches and had taken positive steps to improve their mobile communications service programs. For instance, the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory developed an automated cellular phone validation computer program to monitor usage. In addition, the East Tennessee Technology Park instituted a monthly allowance program for eligible employees that significantly decreased the burden of administering its cellular phone program. Furthermore, the Department is considering a new acquisition strategy for providing cellular phone services. While these actions are encouraging, we believe that additional measures are warranted to achieve complex-wide efficiencies. Consequently, we made several recommendations designed to increase the overall efficiency of the Department's mobile communications program.

MANAGEMENT REACTION

Management concurred with the report's findings and recommendations. Management generally agreed that the acquisition and use of mobile communications devices and services could be more effectively managed and indicated that corrective actions had either already been, or would be taken, to improve the conditions found. Management's comments are included in Appendix 3.

Given the challenging budget environment facing the Department, we concluded that the actions promised represent a positive step toward reducing recurring annual overhead costs. Intensive management oversight will be necessary to ensure that the corrective actions are faithfully executed.

Attachment

cc: Deputy Secretary
Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration
Under Secretary for Energy, Science and Environment
Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management
Director, Office of Management, Budget and Evaluation/Chief Financial Officer
Director, Office of Science
Chief Information Officer

REPORT ON THE USE AND MANAGEMENT OF MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

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ACQUISITION AND USE OF MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

Management of Mobile Communications Devices and Services

Certain Department of Energy (Department) organizations were not optimizing their use and management of cellular phones and pagers. We noted opportunities for improvement at Headquarters, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (Livermore), and at the Y-12 National Security Complex (Y-12).

Cellular Phone Plans

Almost 19 percent of cellular phone users at locations we evaluated had plans that did not fit their individual needs. Some were assigned plans that were too conservative, causing them to surpass their allotment of minutes; other users were enrolled in calling plans that exceeded their needs; and a number of individuals did not use their phones at all. Specifically, we found:

- 242 phones, on average between Fiscal Years (FY) 2002 and 2003, at Headquarters that incurred additional charges for exceeding plan minutes or roaming outside of the plan service area. Based on our analysis, we determined that the Department could have realized savings of approximately \$273,000, had service plans for these phones been adjusted to more effectively meet users' needs.
- 129 phones at Headquarters that averaged less than 20 minutes of usage per month during FYs 2002 and 2003. While there were plans available that offered a low monthly access fee and charges based on minutes used, these phones were not enrolled in those plans. Our analysis indicated that the Department could have realized savings of over \$50,000 (this does not account for roaming, which could lower actual savings) had these phones been assigned to lower cost plans.
- 381 phones, costing \$38,000, were not used during extended periods between FYs 2002 and 2003; these included 171 phones at Headquarters, 115 phones at Y-12 and 95 phones at Livermore. We identified one unused phone at Headquarters, which was in service for 22 months at a cost to the Department of almost \$1,300.

Pager Distribution

At Y-12, we noted that pagers were issued to the majority of site employees without regard to their cost benefit. Specifically, Y-12 issued 3,236 pagers, a total that amounted to over 68 percent of its

4,700 employees, at a cost of over \$880,000 during FYs 2002 and 2003. During our audit, Y-12 took action to review existing pagers and eliminated pagers whose cost was not justified by their mission need. As a result, Y-12 reduced the number of pagers by 719, or 22 percent, saving the Government about \$100,000 per year.

Volume Purchase Discounts

Headquarters also did not regularly take advantage of available Federal volume discounts for cellular phone service. All nationwide service plans with a monthly access fee of \$35 or more were eligible for a 17 percent discount off the service provider's published access fee. The service provider told us that it had informed the Department about this discount as it became available to the plans. However, the Department did not act on this information and take advantage of the discount. During FY 2003, we determined that approximately 300 cellular phones were eligible for, but did not receive, about \$35,000 in available discounts. When we raised this issue, Headquarters officials acted to take advantage of the discounts.

Service Administration

In addition to individual assignment or plan issues, we noted that Headquarters administrative costs were excessive when compared to other sites. Other sites included in our review had administrative costs of 30 percent or less of the respective annual cellular service costs. During FYs 2002 and 2003, Headquarters spent approximately \$466,000, almost 45 percent of the \$1.1 million spent for cellular phone service, for administrative services that were to include optimization of service plans, verification of invoice charges and distribution of usage information to users for reimbursement purposes. However, our review indicated that in spite of these high administrative costs, rate plan optimization and invoice charge verification was not being performed.

Administration Methods

During our review, we identified innovative approaches at several sites that could benefit the complex. In particular, such programs or methods may have helped Headquarters, Livermore and Y-12 reduce or eliminate charges or problems cited in our report. These

practices include automating administrative functions, allowance programs, and reimbursement of business calls made on personal cell phones. For example:

- Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (Berkeley) developed a computer program, at an estimated cost of \$15,000, to enable individual certification of usage, including indicating whether calls were personal in nature; computing reimbursement to be remitted; tracking usage history; and automatically identifying where an alteration in usage plan would better serve user needs. A Berkeley official told us that the program reduced administration time to approximately 20 hours per quarter, and indicated that it was available upon request and had been formally offered to several Department organizations.
- East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP) instituted a \$90 quarterly flat rate allowance for eligible employees to use their personal cell phones for official business. This program effectively eliminated Government-owned cell phones at the site as well as the burden of administering its program. Since implementing the flat rate allowance program, the ETTP cellular phone service costs have decreased from \$164,000 in FY 2003 to almost \$92,000 in FY 2004 resulting in savings to the Department of \$72,000. In addition, the number of cellular phone users dropped from 243 to 188.
- While contractor organizations can take advantage of a flat rate allowance program, Federal offices cannot. However, a Comptroller General decision ruled that Federal agencies can offer a cost reimbursement program, without Congressional approval, for documented business use of employees' personal cellular phones. For example, Headquarters and Oak Ridge Operations could have saved almost \$241,000 in FY 2003 service costs if it had used a per minute reimbursement program. Although there would be additional costs associated with administering such a reimbursement program, these costs would be offset by savings from the curtailment of current administration activities to activate Government cell phones, verify invoice charges, and to distribute usage information to users for reimbursement of their personal calls. At the time of our audit, this type of reimbursement program was being piloted at the Department's Western Area Power Administration.

**Wireless Device
Management Practices**

Certain Department sites had not focused on ensuring that there was a valid/continuing mission need for wireless communication services by individuals or that such services were obtained in the most economical manner. For example, the Headquarters official

monitoring cell phone costs was not examining individual usage patterns or the changing eligibility requirements for discounts on a regular basis. This inadequate oversight of rate plans and invoice charges resulted in the Department spending more than necessary on cellular services and not receiving discounts for which it was eligible. Officials at Y-12 were also not reviewing pager issuance to ensure that the number of pagers was optimal and were justified by their cost benefit. Additionally, the Department had not issued guidance regarding the desirability of using allowances or reimbursements for cell phones as a way of reducing administrative costs.

Opportunities for Savings and other Benefits

Not focusing on the administration of mobile communications devices contributed to unnecessary expenditures. At the organizations we visited, the Department could have saved as much as \$1.13 million annually if they had adopted more efficient methods for use and management of cellular phones and pagers. About \$1.03 million of such savings could be achieved by using innovative methods employed by other Departmental organizations. In particular, by adopting a flat rate allowance program for contractor managed sites, the Department could save almost \$759,000 per year in service and administration costs. Additionally, Headquarters and Oak Ridge Operations could have saved about \$272,000¹ of their \$622,000 service costs for Federally managed phones in FY 2003 had they reimbursed employees for all minutes used for Government business on their personal cell phones instead of providing the service to the employees. Further, reductions in the number of pagers at Y-12 during our audit resulted in an annual savings of \$100,000. Without program improvements, the Department only has limited assurance that these devices and services can be acquired, used, and managed in a cost effective manner and in support of mission requirements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure cost-effective procurement of cellular phones and pagers, we recommend that the Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), Acting Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management (EM), and Director, Office of Science (SC), in conjunction with the Chief Information Officer (CIO) direct:

¹ The \$272,000 annual savings represents the difference in service plan costs incurred of \$622,000 and the per minute reimbursement cost of \$350,000 had a per minute reimbursement plan been used. The savings were calculated using the same rate used to seek reimbursement from the employees, presently \$.25 per minute.

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1. Federal and contractor organizations to periodically evaluate the issuance, use and service plans for cellular phones and pagers and eliminate or adjust their availability and use as appropriate;
 2. Contractor organizations to consider eliminating all use of Government-owned or managed cellular phones, where not critical to emergency response and continuity of operations, and adopting a flat rate reimbursement program for employees using personal cellular phones for official business; and,
 3. Federal organizations to consider eliminating all use of Federally-owned or managed cellular phones, where not critical to emergency response and continuity of operations, and adopting a program to reimburse employees for using personal cellular phones for official business.

MANAGEMENT REACTION

Management generally concurred with the report's findings and recommendations and indicated that corrective actions had either already been, or would be, taken consistent with our recommendations. The CIO concurred with our recommendations stating that adopting reimbursement plans for personal use cell phones warranted further research and analysis. Management comments were also received from the Offices of Science and Environmental Management under separate memorandum, which indicated full concurrence with all recommendations. The NNSA initial written comments indicated its non-concurrence with several findings and recommendations. Subsequently, the NNSA Director of Policy and Internal Controls Management clarified the Administration's position and stated that the Administration concurs with our recommendations. The Office of Management, Budget, and Evaluation (OMBE) informally commented on a draft of this report and agreed with the recommendations, but indicated that it is also planning to conduct a requirements analysis to identify standardized cell phone services for the Department. OMBE plans to use the standardized services as part of an acquisition strategy to leverage the purchasing power of the Department to obtain discounts on cell phone services that would be available Department-wide.

AUDITOR COMMENTS

Management comments are generally responsive to our recommendations. Based on these comments, we made changes to the body of the report where appropriate.

Appendix 1

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this audit was to determine whether the Department had effectively managed the acquisition and use of mobile or wireless communications devices.

SCOPE

The audit was performed between August 2003 and August 2004 at Headquarters, Washington, DC; Oak Ridge Operations Office, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Y-12 National Security Complex, and East Tennessee Technology Park, Oak Ridge, TN; Savannah River Site, Aiken, SC; Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Livermore, CA; and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Berkeley, CA. We evaluated the overall mobile communications services contract administration and device management. We did not evaluate the specific details and nature of individual cellular phone use.

METHODOLOGY

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed Federal regulations, such as the Federal Acquisition Regulation, and Departmental directives and guidance pertaining to communications resources;
- Reviewed relevant reports issued by the Office of Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office;
- Held discussions with officials and staff at various organizations; and,
- Analyzed cost data provided by the vendors and organizations.

The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted Government auditing standards for performance audits and included tests of internal controls and compliance with laws and regulations to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objective. Accordingly, we assessed significant internal controls and performance measures under the *Government Performance and Results Act of 1993* regarding overall acquisition, use and management of mobile communications services. Because our review was limited, it would not necessarily have disclosed all internal control deficiencies that may have existed at the time of our audit. In addition, specific performance standards were not established for the area of mobile communications services and, therefore, we could not assess how they might have been used to

Appendix 1

measure performance. We did not rely on computer-processed data to accomplish our audit objective. The Offices of Science and Environmental Management waived their exit conferences. Exit conferences were held with the National Nuclear Security Administration and the Office of Chief Information Officer on November 9, 2004, and November 29, 2004, respectively.

Appendix 2

PRIOR REPORTS

- *Telecommunications Infrastructure* (DOE/IG-0537, December 2001). The Department had not effectively consolidated or optimized significant segments of its telecommunications infrastructure. Duplicative data transmission infrastructures existed across the complex, and the Department had not optimized the acquisition of Internet and video services. Problems occurred because the Department had not developed and implemented a coordinated approach to the acquisition and use of telecommunications equipment and services.
- Special Report on *The Department of Energy's Implementation of the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996* (DOE/IG-0507, June 2001). While the Department has taken action to address certain information technology (IT) related management problems, it has not been completely successful in implementing the requirements of the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 (Act). Specifically, the Department had not satisfied major requirements of the Act to develop and implement an integrated, enterprise-wide, IT architecture, closely monitor policy implementation efforts, and acquire IT related assets in an effective and efficient manner. Factors, such as a decentralized approach to IT management, the organizational placement of the Chief Information Officer, and the lack of an IT baseline, may have contributed to these problems and affected the Department's ability to satisfy Clinger-Cohen requirements.



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

November 10, 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR RICKEY R. HASS
ASSISTANT INSPECTOR GENERAL
FOR AUDIT OPERATIONS
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

FROM: ROSITA O. PARKES *Rosita O. Parkes*
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

SUBJECT: Office of the Chief Information Officer's (OCIO) Response to
the Use and Management of Mobile Communications Services
Inspector General's (IG) Audit (A03TG051)

The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) would like to express our appreciation for the opportunity to review the latest IG draft report, subject: "Use and Management of Mobile Communications Services." It is our understanding that the audit was initiated due to an increasing demand for wireless and/or mobile communications devices from the individual Department of Energy (DOE) professionals as well as the increased usage levels of currently deployed devices in support of DOE mission. The OCIO is in a unique position to offer some alternate recommendations on the "Use and Management of Mobile Communications Services."

DOE Headquarters (HQ) currently has a draft policy on authorized use of mobile communications devices; however there is no defined acquisition strategy for the purchasing of wireless services. The absence of an acquisition strategy has resulted in the individual DOE Staff and Program Offices dictating their own requirements for multiple wireless devices and wireless service providers in support of their mission. In all cases, after these determinations are made, each individual Staff or Program Office orders the required service plan and wireless device through the OCIO.

The OCIO's responsibility is to provide the pipeline for acquiring the required mobile communications services and associated wireless devices from the various vendors and not to determine the specific recipients of these services. The OCIO currently offers five (5) vendors of wireless services where there are literally hundreds of iterations of call plans and end-user devices available covering: areas of coverage, capabilities, available minutes, evenings, weekends, additional minute premiums, volume discounts, etc. In most every instance, the point of contact (POC) from each Staff and Program Office requests the vendor of choice, the service plan, and the end-user device required to fulfill their mission and provides the required funding memorandum to the OCIO for funding the service for a defined period of performance. The DOE Staff and Program offices are not required to provide assurances that their organization ensured that a valid mission



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Appendix 3

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need exists, nor warrant that the government-furnished end-user device will be used in a cost-effective manner. The OCIO only arranges for the service and requires the Staff and Program Offices to validate the charges for each period of service for each of the specific users within the respective organization.

OCIO fully supports and concurs with Recommendation #1 – “Federal and contractor organizations to periodically evaluate utilization.” To this end, OCIO has developed an “Under and Overage Usage” Analysis Report on each Staff and Program Office for ensuring more effective management of the service and insuring that service plans are adjusted for a more cost-effective operation. These reports are forwarded to the POC of each Staff and Program Office in conjunction with certification and validation of the charges itemized on the latest monthly invoices. This analysis provides a valuable tool to the staff offices and program offices to assist them with their periodic evaluation of the wireless services under their area of responsibility and ensuring the adjustment of service plans for insuring a more cost-effective operation.

Moreover, OCIO believes that Recommendation #2 – “Contractor organizations to consider eliminating all contractor-owned or managed cellular phones adopting a flat rate reimbursement for personal phones” - and Recommendation #3 – “Federal organization’s adopting a reimbursement program using personal phones” - warrant further research and analysis. The implementation of such practices could affect any Federal organization’s ability to perform and conduct disaster recovery and continuity of operations in time of a crisis, emergency or disaster. Using personal phones will not allow disaster recovery, crisis and emergency personnel to operate in an adverse, congested environment under the National Communications System Wireless Priority Service (WPS). These recommended practices could inhibit DOE from adequately responding to national crises, emergencies and disasters. Furthermore, the use of personal phones relative to the performance of scientific research and analysis for enabling the economic security and viability of our Nation should also be discouraged. OCIO recommends that if any DOE employee uses their personal cell phone that they on be allowed to charge for the specific charge of any official government call vice subsidizing employees at a flat rate of \$40.00 per month.

OCIO is always open to suggestions on the use of wireless devices. The deployment and use of these devices is decentralized down to the various staff offices and program offices within the DOE. Each Staff or Program Office is responsible for the procedures and approvals for use of wireless communications within their respective organizations; OCIO simply provides the mechanism for obtaining the requested services and devices. We would be more than happy to assist the Office of Management, MBE, in developing a draft policy on the use of wireless devices within DOE HQ. Once this policy has been formulated and vetted for concurrence among the DOE staff offices and program offices, it should then be processed through the DOE internet technology governance structure to

Appendix 3

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the DOE Management Council for approval. The OCIO would recommend that a copy of the findings contained within this audit be forwarded to the DOE Management Council for review and determination on the feasibility of such a policy.

If you have any questions relative to this response and on this matter, please feel free to contact Harry Hixon, Associate CIO for Operations, OCIO, 301-903-1940.



Department of Energy
Office of Science
Washington, DC 20585

Office of the Director

October 5, 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR RICKEY R. HASS
ASSISTANT INSPECTOR GENERAL
FOR AUDIT OPERATIONS
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

FROM: MILTON D. JOHNSON *MDS*
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
OFFICE OF SCIENCE

SUBJECT: Office of Science Comments on Inspector General Draft
Report, "Use and Management of Mobile Communications
Services"

In response to your September 16, 2004 memorandum, the Office of Science has reviewed the subject report and concurs in the recommendations contained in the report. The Office of Science will be taking corrective action in response to these recommendations. My office will issue a memorandum to the Senior Information Management Executive for the Office of Science and the Office of Science field sites reminding them of the importance of ensuring cost-effective procurement of cellular telephones and pagers for Federal and for contractor employees. It is anticipated that this memorandum will be issued by October 15, 2004. In the memorandum, they will be advised:

- to evaluate periodically the issuance, use and service plans for cellular phones and pagers;
- to adjust or eliminate the availability and use of cellular telephones and pagers, as appropriate; and
- to consider a program to reimburse contractor employees for using personal cell phones for official business based on a flat rate.

The Office of Science does not have an issue with the monetary impact identified in the report.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this draft report.

Please contact Walt Polansky at 301-903-0192 if you have any questions regarding these comments.



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United States Government

Department of Energy

memorandum

DATE: October 5, 2004

REPLY TO EM-33 (Jeanne Beard, 202-586-6256)

ATTN OF:

SUBJECT: Review of Draft Report on "Use and Management of Mobile Communications Services"

TO: Rickey R. Hass, Assistant Inspector General for Audit Operations

The Office of Environmental Management (EM) has reviewed the subject report dated September 16, 2004. EM concurs with the report conclusions and recommendations that set forth compelling arguments for potential savings to the Department of Energy. More efficient administration of mobile communications service programs at Headquarters and our field sites will enable EM to increase the dollars spent for its cleanup and closure mission priorities.

EM obtains all electronic devices through the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) in order to take advantage of the discount plans that the OCIO has secured with major vendors. Consistent with Recommendation #1, EM proactively reviewed and validated the use of electronic devices within our Headquarters office earlier this year. To reduce costs and allow the inventory to be redistributed on a priority basis within the EM organization, we identified devices that were noncritical or unnecessary to complete mission work. In addition, our review ensured that each device is on the most cost-effective monthly plan based on usage. EM intends to conduct this validation annually so that an accurate inventory and supply can be maintained.

Further, EM agrees with Recommendations #2 and #3. As a result of this draft report, we plan to conduct an EM complex-wide review as the initial review focused only on Headquarters. EM will continue to seek ways to improve usage of mobile communications devices to reduce costs, and will closely monitor recently adopted innovative acquisition approaches implemented in other program offices and agencies. We will evaluate, for example, expanding the quarterly flat rate allowance program implemented at the East Tennessee Technology Park that has shown significant cost savings as noted in the Inspector General's draft report. EM will complete this more comprehensive review by the end of the 2nd Quarter FY 2005.

If you have any questions or concerns please call me, or Eugene Schmitt of my staff at (202) 586-8754



Paul M. Golan
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Environmental Management

cc: Ronald Smith, EM-33
Jeffrey Allison, SR
Gerald Boyd, OR

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