

**Presentation to the Joint Commission on Technology and Science
Integrated Government Advisory Committee
August 2, 2005**

Commonwealth of Virginia
Information Technology Resource Management Standard
Removal of Commonwealth Data from Surplus Computer Hard Drives and
Electronic Media Standard dated March 8, 2004, Revision 1

Scope of the Standard: The standard is applicable to all State agencies, their field operations, and institutions of higher education that surplus, transfer, trade-in, otherwise dispose of, or replace the computer hard drives and electronic media resources in the Commonwealth. This standard also applies to equipment owned or leased by the agency. The heads of State agencies, the heads of their field offices, and the heads of institutions of higher education are responsible for compliance with this standard. This standard is offered as guidance only to local government entities.

Purpose: To define the minimum requirements for the removal of Commonwealth data from an agency's computer hard drives and electronic media resources prior to its being surplus, transferred, traded-in, disposed of, or the hard drive is replaced.

- 1) To prevent unauthorized use or misuse of state information, and promote the privacy and security of sensitive and/or confidential information resources within the Commonwealth.
- 2) To foster state agency compliance with federal regulations dealing with the confidentiality of personally identifiable information. Included are regulations such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (aka, Financial Services Modernization Act), and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Definition of Removal of Commonwealth Data: Removal of Commonwealth data from hard drives and electronic media is the process of removing sensitive and/or confidential programs or data files on computer hard drives or electronic media in a manner that gives assurance that the information cannot be recovered by keyboard or laboratory attack.

Standards: The following standards shall be followed by all agencies as well as their field offices when a computer system is surplus, transferred, traded-in, or disposed of, or the hard drive is replaced. The following standards also apply to contractor-supplied computers.

- Before a computer system is surplus, transferred, reassigned within the same agency, traded-in, disposed of, or the hard drive is replaced, all sensitive and/or confidential program or data files on any storage media shall be completely erased or otherwise made unreadable in accordance with this procedure unless there is specific intent to transfer the particular software or data to the purchaser/recipient.

- Hard drives of surplus computer equipment shall be securely erased within 60 days after replacement.
- Whenever licensed software is resident on any computer media being surplus, transferred, traded-in, disposed of, or the hard drive is replaced, the terms of the license agreement shall be followed.
- After the removal of Commonwealth data from the hard drive is complete, the process shall be certified and a record maintained as specified by the agency's records retention schedule.
- Each agency head or head of an institution of higher education should create an audit function to randomly test for compliance with this standard for any computer hard drives or electronic media that are surplus, ready for public auction, transferred, traded-in, disposed of, or when the hard drive is being replaced.

Acceptable Methods: There are three acceptable methods for removing data from hard drives.

- Overwriting – Overwriting is an approved method for removal of Commonwealth data from hard disk storage media. Overwriting of data means replacing previously stored data on a drive or disk with a predetermined pattern of meaningless information.
- Degaussing – A process whereby the magnetic media are erased, (i.e., returned to a zero state). Degaussing (demagnetizing) reduces the magnetic flux to virtual zero by applying a reverse magnetizing field.
- Physical Destruction – Hard drives should be physically destroyed when they are defective or cannot be economically repaired or Commonwealth data cannot be removed for reuse. Physical destruction shall be accomplished to an extent that precludes any possible further use of the hard drive.

Certification of the Removal of Commonwealth Data from Surplus Computer Hard Drives and Electronic Media

Each agency is responsible to audit the removal of Commonwealth data for compliance with this standard when any computer hard drives or electronic media are surplus, transferred, traded-in, disposed of, or the hard drive is being replaced as well as to ensure the audit process occurs in a timely manner, and the audit controls are effective.

Software for the Removal of Commonwealth Data from Hard Drives and Electronic Media

VITA will maintain on its website a list of software that according to the manufacturers' claims (which the agencies are cautioned to verify), appear to meet this Standard for the removal of data from hard drives and electronic media. The list of recommended software may be viewed at the following URL:

<http://www.vita.virginia.gov/docs/pubs/removingData.cfm>