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SUBJECT: The Social Security Number

SSA has continually emphasized the fact that the SSN identifies a particular record only and the Social Security Card indicates the person whose record is identified by that number. In no way can the Social Security Card identify the bearer. From 1946 to 1972 the legend "Not for Identification" was printed on the face of the card. However, many people ignored the message and the legend was eventually dropped. The social security number is the most widely used and carefully controlled number in the country, which makes it an attractive identifier.

With the exception of the restrictions imposed on Federal and some State and local organizations by the Privacy Act of 1974, organizations requiring a unique identifier for purposes of controlling their records are not prohibited from using (with the consent of the holder) the SSN. SSA records are confidential and knowledge of a person's SSN does not give the user access to information in SSA files which is confidential by law.

Many commercial enterprises have used the SSN in various promotional efforts. These uses are not authorized by SSA, but SSA has no authority to prohibit such activities as most are not illegal. Some of these unauthorized uses are: SSN contests; skip-tracers; sale or distribution of plastic or metal cards; pocketbook numbers (the numbers used on sample social security cards in wallets); misleading advertising, commercial enterprises charging fees for SSN services; identification of personal property.

The Social Security Number (SSN) is composed of 3 parts, XXX-XX-XXXX, called the Area, Group, and Serial. For the most part, (there are exceptions), the Area is determined by where the individual APPLIED for SSN (before 1972) or RESIDED at time of application (after 1972). The areas are assigned follows:

000	unused	387-399	WI	528-529	UT
001-003	NH	400-407	KY	530	NV
004-007	ME	408-415	TN	531-539	WA
008-009	VT	416-424	AL	540-544	OR
010-034	MA	425-428	MS	545-573	CA
035-039	RI	429-432	AR	574	AK
040-049	CT	433-439	LA	575-576	HI
050-134	NY	440-448	OK	577-579	DC
135-158	NJ	449-467	TX	580	VI Virgin Islands
159-211	PA	468-477	MN	581-584	PR Puerto Rico
212-220	MD	478-485	IA	585	NM
221-222	DE	486-500	MO	586	PI Pacific Islands*
223-231	VA	501-502	ND	587-588	MS
232-236	WV	503-504	SD	589-595	FL
237-246	NC	505-508	NE	596-599	PR Puerto Rico
247-251	SC	509-515	KS	600-601	AZ

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252-260 GA	516-517 MT	602-626 CA
261-267 FL	518-519 ID	*Guam, American Samoa,
268-302 OH	520 WY	Northern Mariana Islands,
303-317 IN	521-524 CO	Philippine Islands
318-361 IL	525 NM	
362-386 MI	526-527 AZ	

627-699 unassigned, for future use

700-728 Railroad workers through 1963, then discontinued

729-899 unassigned, for future use

900-999 not valid SSNs, but were used for program purposes
when state aid to the aged, blind and disabled was
converted to a federal program administered by SSA.

As the Areas assigned to a locality are exhausted, new areas from the pool are assigned. This is why some states have non-contiguous groups of Areas.

The Group portion of the SSN has no meaning other than to determine whether or not a number has been assigned. SSA publishes a list every month of the highest group assigned for each SSN Area. The order of assignment for the Groups is: odd numbers under 10, even numbers over 9, even numbers under 9 except for 00 which is never used, and odd numbers over 10. For example, if the highest group assigned for area 999 is 72, then we know that the number 999-04-1234 is an invalid number because even Groups under 9 have not yet been assigned.

The Serial portion of the SSN has no meaning. The Serial is not assigned in strictly numerical order. The Serial 0000 is never assigned.

Before 1973, Social Security Cards with pre-printed numbers were issued to each local SSA office. The numbers were assigned by the local office. In 1973, SSN assignment was automated and outstanding stocks of pre-printed cards were destroyed. All SSNs are now assigned by computer from headquarters. There are rare cases in which the computer system can be forced to accept a manual assignment such as a person refusing a number with 666 in it!

A pamphlet entitled "The Social Security Number" (Pub. No. 05-10633) provides an explanation of the SSN's structure and the method of assigning and validating Social Security numbers.

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