

NATIONAL SECURITY GUIDELINE K: HANDLING PROTECTED INFORMATION

The Concern. Deliberate or negligent failure to comply with rules and regulations for handling protected information-which includes classified and other sensitive government information, and proprietary information-raises doubt about an individual's trustworthiness, judgment, reliability, or willingness and ability to safeguard such information, and is a serious security concern..

Conditions that could raise a security concern and may be disqualifying include:

- (a) deliberate or negligent disclosure of classified or other protected information to unauthorized persons, including but not limited to personal or business contacts, to the media, or to persons present at seminars, meetings, or conferences;
- (b) collecting or storing protected information in any unauthorized location;
- (c) loading, drafting, editing, modifying, storing, transmitting, or otherwise handling protected information, including images, on any unauthorized equipment or medium;
- (d) inappropriate efforts to obtain or view protected information outside one's need to know;
- (e) copying classified or modifying protected information in an unauthorized manner designed to conceal or remove classification or other document control markings;
- (f) viewing or downloading information from a secure system when the information is beyond the individual's need-to-know;
- (g) any failure to comply with rules for the protection of classified or other sensitive information;
- (h) negligence or lax security practices that persist despite counseling by management; and
- (i) failure to comply with rules or regulations that results in damage to the National Security, regardless of whether it was deliberate or negligent.

Conditions that could mitigate security concerns include:

- (a) so much time has elapsed since the behavior, or it has happened so infrequently or under such unusual circumstances, that it is unlikely to recur and does not cast doubt on the individual's current reliability, trustworthiness, or good judgment;
- (b) the individual responded favorably to counseling or remedial security training and now demonstrates a positive attitude toward the discharge of security responsibilities;
- (c) the security violations were due to improper or inadequate training or unclear instructions; and

(d) the violation was inadvertent, it was promptly reported, there is no evidence of compromise, and it does not suggest a pattern.