

# FAX MESSAGE



## Press Office

DATE: 7/1

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Number of pages being transmitted (including this cover) 21

Message: \_\_\_\_\_

# SSA PRESS OFFICE

1. Do you have a photograph of the original Social Security cards?

Per our telephone conversation, SSA's historian has an original of the first Social Security card. I am arranging for him to send you a scanned electronic version.

Just as a point of information, there are currently 17 valid versions of the Social Security card in use.

2. When did SSA cards start carrying the words "Not for Identification?"

The words first appeared on the 7th version of the Social Security card back in 1946.

When were these words removed?

They stopped appearing with the 18th version of the card back in 1972.

Did they mean that the number should not be used for identification purposes, or did they mean that the card should not be used, since it did not contain a photograph and did not have to be signed in the presence of a government official?

Until 1978 a person was not required to present proof of identity to apply for a Social Security Number. The card verified the person to whom the Social Security Number was assigned, not the identity of the person. The statement was removed because it was confusing to employers as to whether to accept the card as evidence of the person's Social Security Number.

3. Do you have a record of the expanded use of Social Security Numbers by other Federal and private organizations?

See attached -- "Authorized Uses of Social Security Numbers (SSNs)" and "Chronology of Social Security Number (SSN)/Card Events"

When did the army start using SSNs instead of serial numbers?

The Department of Defense started using the SSN as the Armed Forces identifier in 1967.

When did credit databanks start using them?

The Social Security Administration does not track the use of the SSN by private organizations.

4. Is SSA still using its punch-card systems from the 1930s?

No -- SSA stopped using that system decades ago, the exact date is not known, but probably some back in the 1960s. Currently the SSN/Social Security card issuance

process is totally automated.

5. Were there ever rules prohibiting the use of SSNs for other purposes other than Social Security?

No.

## CHRONOLOGY OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN)/CARD EVENTS

1935 The Social Security Act (P.L. 74-271) enacted. It did not expressly mention the use of SSNs, but it authorized the creation of some type of recordkeeping scheme. Additionally, the Act provided that the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, with the approval of the Secretary of the Treasury, shall make and publish rules and regulations to enforce the Act.

Treasury Decision 4704, a Treasury regulation in 1936 which required the issuance of an account number to each employee covered by the Social Security program.

The Social Security Board considered various numbering systems and ways (such as metal tags, etc.) by which employees could indicate they had been issued a number.

1936- Approximately 30 million applications for SSNs were processed  
1937 between November 1936 and June 30, 1937.

1943 Executive Order 9397 (3 CFR (1943-1948 Comp.) 283-284) (1943) issued by President Roosevelt required:

- All Federal components to use the SSN "exclusively" whenever the component found it advisable to set up a new identification system for individuals.
- The Social Security Board to cooperate with Federal uses of the number by issuing and verifying numbers for other Federal agencies.

1961 The Civil Service Commission adopted the SSN as an official Federal employee identifier.

Internal Revenue Code Amendments (P.L. 87-397) required each taxpayer to furnish identifying number for tax reporting.

1962 The Internal Revenue Service adopted the SSN as its official taxpayer identification number.

- 1964 Treasury Department, via internal policy, required buyers of series II savings bonds to provide their SSNs.
- 1965 Internal Revenue Amendments (P.L. 89-384) Enacted Medicare. It became necessary for most individuals age 65 and older to have an SSN.
- 1966 The Veterans Administration began to use the SSN as the hospital admissions number and for patient recordkeeping.
- 1967 The Department of Defense, by a Secretary of Defense memorandum, adopted the SSN in lieu of the military service number for identifying Armed Forces personnel.
- 1970 Bank Records and Foreign Transactions Act (P.L. 91-508) required all banks, savings and loan associations, credit unions and brokers/dealers in securities to obtain the SSNs of all of their customers. Also, financial institutions were required to file a report with the IRS, including the SSN of the customer, of each deposit, withdrawal, exchange of currency or other payment or transfer involving more than \$10,000.
- 1971 SSA task force report on issues raised by nonprogram SSN use published which proposed that SSA take a "cautious and conservative" position toward SSN use and do nothing to promote the use of the SSN as an identifier. The report recommended that SSA:
- Use mass SSN enumeration in schools as a long-range, cost-effective approach to tightening up the SSN system, and
  - Consider cooperating with specific health, education and welfare uses of the SSN by State, local, and other nonprofit organizations.
- 1972 Social Security Amendments of 1972 (P.L. 92-603):
- Required SSA to issue SSNs to all legally admitted aliens at entry and to anyone receiving or applying for any benefit paid for by Federal funds;
  - Required SSA to obtain evidence to establish age, citizenship, or alien status and identity.

- Authorized SSA to enumerate children below school age at the request of parents and at the time they first entered school.

1973 Buyers of series E savings bonds are required by the Treasury Department to provide their SSNs.

Report of the HEW (now HHS) Secretary's Advisory Committee on Automated Personal Data System concluded that the adoption of a universal identifier by this country was not desirable; also found that the SSN was not suitable for such a purpose as it does not meet the criteria of a universal identifier that distinguishes a person from all others.

1974 Privacy Act (P.L. 93-579) enacted effective September 27, 1975 to limit governmental use of the SSN:

- Provided that no State or local government agency may withhold a benefit from a person simply because the individual refuses to furnish his or her SSN.
- Required that Federal, State and local agencies which request an individual to disclose his/her SSN inform the individual if disclosure was mandatory or voluntary. (This was the first mention of SSN use by local governments.)

1975 Social Services Amendments of 1974 (P.L. 93-647) provided that:

- disclosure of an individual's SSN as a condition of eligibility for AFDC benefits; and
- Office of Child Support Enforcement Parent Locator Service may require disclosure of limited information (including SSN and whereabouts) contained in SSA records.

1976 Tax Reform Act of 1976 (P.L. 94-455) included the following amendments to the Social Security Act:

Authorized SSN use by the States in the administration of any tax, general public assistance, driver's license or motor vehicle registration law within their jurisdiction and to authorize the States to require individuals affected by such laws to furnish their SSNs to the States;

- Made misuse of the SSN for any purpose a violation of the Social Security Act;
- Made disclosure or compelling disclosure of the SSN of any person a violation of the Social Security Act.
- Amended 6109 of the Internal Revenue Code to provide that the SSN be used as the tax identification number for all tax purposes. While the Treasury Department had been using the SSN as the tax identification number by regulation since 1962, this law codifies that requirement.

Federal Advisory Committee on False Identification recommended that penalties for misuse be increased and evidence requirements tightened; rejected the idea of national identifier and did not even consider the SSN for such a purpose.

1977 Food Stamp Act of 1977 (P.L. 96-58) required disclosure of SSNs of all household members as a condition of eligibility for participation in the food stamp program.

Privacy Protection Study Commission recommended that:

- No steps be taken towards developing standard, universal label for individuals until safeguards and policies regarding permissible uses and disclosures were proven effective; and
- Executive Order 9397 be amended so that Federal agencies could no longer use it as legal authority to require disclosure of an individual's SSN. (No action taken.)

The Carter Administration proposed that the Social Security card be one of the authorized documents by which an employer could be assured that a job applicant could work in this country but also stated that the SSN card should not become a national identity document.

1978 SSA began to require evidence of age, citizenship, and identity of all SSN applicants.

1981 Reagan Administration stated that it "is explicitly opposed to the creation of a national identity card" but recognized the need for a means for employers to comply with the employer sanctions provisions of its immigration reform legislation.

Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981 (P.L. 97-35) required the disclosure of the SSNs of all adult members in the household of children applying to the school lunch program.

Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981--Social Security Benefits Act (P.L. 97-123)

- Section 4 added alteration and forgery of a Social Security card to the list of prohibited acts and increased the penalties for such acts.
- Section 6 required any Federal State or local government agency to furnish the name and SSN of prisoners convicted of a felony to the Secretary of HHS, upon written request, to enforce suspension of disability benefits to certain imprisoned felons.

Department of Defense Authorization Act, 1982 (P.L. 97-86) required disclosure of the SSNs to the Selective Service System of all individuals required to register for the draft. It also required the Secretary of HHS to provide the Director of Selective Service the names, dates of birth, addresses and SSNs of individuals required to register for the purpose of enforcing the Military Selective Service Act.

1982 Debt Collection Act of 1982 (P.L. 97-365) required that all applicants for loans under any Federal loan program furnish their SSNs to the agency supplying the loan.

All Social Security cards issued to legal aliens not authorized to work within the United States were annotated "NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT" beginning in May.

1983 Social Security Amendments of 1983 (P.L. 98 21) required that new and replacement Social Security cards issued after October 30 be made of banknote paper and (to the maximum extent practicable) not be subject to counterfeiting.

The Interest and Dividend Tax Compliance Act (P.L. 98-67):

- required SSNs for all interest-bearing accounts.
- provided for a penalty of \$50 for all individuals who fail to furnish a correct tax identification number (usually the SSN).

1984 Deficit Reduction Act of 1984 (P.L. 98-369)

- Amended the Social Security Act to establish an income and eligibility verification system involving State agencies administering the AFDC, Medicaid, unemployment compensation, the food stamp programs, and State programs under a plan approved under title I, X, XIV, or XVI of the Act. States were permitted to require the SSN as a condition of eligibility for benefits under any of these programs.
- Amended Section 6050I of the IRC to require that persons engaged in a trade or business file a report (including SSNs) with the IRS for cash transactions over \$10,000.
- Amended Section 215 of the IRC to authorize the Secretary of HHS to publish regulations that require a spouse paying alimony to furnish IRS with the taxpayer identification number (i.e., SSN) of the spouse receiving alimony payments.

1986 The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-603):

- Required the Comptroller General to investigate technological changes that could reduce the potential for counterfeiting Social Security cards;
- Provides that the Social Security card may be used to establish the eligibility of a prospective employee for employment; and
- Required the Secretary of HHS to undertake a study of the feasibility and costs of establishing an SSN verification system.

Tax Reform Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-514) required individuals filing a tax return due after December 31, 1987, to include the taxpayer identification number--usually the SSN--of each dependent age 5 or older.

Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-750) authorized the Secretary of Transportation to require an SSN on commercial motor vehicle operators' licenses.

Higher Education Amendments of 1986 (P.L. 99-498) required that student loan applicants submit their SSN as a condition for eligibility.

1987 SSA initiated a demonstration project on August 17 in the State of New Mexico enabling parents to obtain Social Security numbers for their newborn infants automatically when the infant's birth is registered by the State. The program was expanded nationwide in 1989. Currently, all 50 States participate in the "Enumeration at Birth" program, as well as New York City, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

1988 Housing and Community Development Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-242) authorized the Secretary of the Department of HUD to require disclosure of a person's SSN as a condition of eligibility for any HUD program.

Family Support Act of 1988 (P.L. 100 485):

- Section 125 required, beginning November 1, 1990, a State to obtain the SSNs of the parents when issuing a birth certificate.
- Section 704(a) required individuals filing a tax return due after December 31, 1989, to include the taxpayer identification number usually the SSN--of each dependent age 2 or older.

Technical and Miscellaneous Revenue Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-647):

- authorized a State and/or any blood donation facility to use SSNs to identify blood donors (205(c)(2)(F)).
- required that all title II beneficiaries either have or have applied for an SSN in order to receive benefits. This provision became effective with dates of initial entitlement of June 1989 or later. Beneficiaries who refused enumeration were entitled but placed in suspense.

Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-690) deleted the \$5,000 and \$25,000 upper limits on fines that could be imposed for violations of section 208 of the Social Security Act. The general limit of \$250,000 for felonies in the U.S. Code now applied to SSN violations under section 208 of the Social Security Act. Also, penalties for misuse of SSNs apply as well in cases where the number was referred to by any other name (e.g., taxpayer identification number (TIN)).

1989 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1989 (P.L. 101-239) required that the National Student Loan Data System include, among other things, the names and SSNs of borrowers.

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 1989 (P.L. 101-147) requires the member of the household who applies for the school lunch program to provide the SSN of the parent of the child for whom the application is made.

1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-508)

- Section 7201 (Computer Matching and Privacy Protection Amendments of 1990) provided that no adverse action may be taken against an individual receiving benefits as a result of a matching program without verification of the information or notification of the individual regarding the findings with time to contest.
- Section 8053 required an SSN for eligibility for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA).
- Section 11112 required that individuals filing a tax return due after December 31, 1991, include the taxpayer identification number--usually the SSN--of each dependent age 1 or older.

Food and Agricultural Resources Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-624)--  
Section 1735:

- required an SSN for the officers of food and retail stores that redeem Food Stamps
- provided that SSNs maintained as a result of any law enacted on or after October 1, 1990, be confidential and not be disclosed.

1994 Social Security Independence and Program Improvements Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-296):

- Section 304, authorized the use of the SSN for jury selection.
- Section 314 authorized cross matching of SSNs and Employer Identification Numbers maintained by the Department of Agriculture with other Federal agencies for the purpose of investigating both food stamp fraud and violations of other Federal laws.
- Section 318 authorized the use of the SSN by the Department of Labor in administration of Federal workers' compensation laws.

Uruguay Round Agreement Act (P.L. 103-465) generally required that individuals include the taxpayer identification number--usually the SSN--of each dependent regardless of age beginning with tax returns filed after December 31, 1994.

1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193) (Welfare Reform):

- Section 111 required the Commissioner of Social Security to develop and submit to Congress a prototype of a counterfeit-resistant Social Security card that: is made of durable, tamper-resistant material (e.g., plastic); employs technologies that provide security features (e.g., magnetic stripe); and provides individuals with reliable proof of citizenship or legal resident alien status.
- Section 111 also required the Commissioner of Social Security to study and report to Congress on different methods of improving the Social Security card application process, including evaluation of the cost and workload implications of issuing a counterfeit-resistant Social Security card for all individuals and evaluation of the feasibility and cost implications of imposing a user fee for replacement cards.
- Section 316 required HHS to transmit to SSA, for verification purposes, certain information about individuals and employers maintained under the Federal Parent Locator Service in an automated directory. SSA is required to verify the accuracy of, correct, or supply to the extent possible, and report to HHS the

name, SSN, and birth date of individuals and the employer identification number of employers. SSA is to be reimbursed by HHS for the cost of this verification service.

- Section 317 provided that State child support enforcement procedures require the SSN of any applicant for a professional license, commercial driver's license, occupational license, or marriage license be recorded on the application. The SSN of any person subject to a divorce decree, support order, or paternity determination or acknowledgement would have to be placed in the pertinent records. SSNs are required on death certificates.
- Section 451 provided that, in order to be eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit, an individual must include on his or her tax return an SSN which was not assigned for nonwork purposes.

Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 1997 (P.L. 104 208)  
(Division C--Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996) (Immigration Reform):

- Sections 401-404 provide for 3 specific employment verification pilot programs in which employers would voluntarily participate. In general, the pilot programs would allow an employer to confirm the identity and employment eligibility of the individual. SSA and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) would provide a secondary verification process to confirm the validity of the information provided. SSA would compare the name and SSN provided and advise whether the name and number match SSA records and whether the SSN is valid for employment.
- Section 414 required the Commissioner of Social Security to report to Congress every year the aggregate number of SSNs issued to noncitizens not authorized to work, but under which earnings were reported. Also required the Commissioner of Social Security to transmit to the Attorney General a report on the extent to which SSNs and Social Security cards are used by noncitizens for fraudulent purposes.
- Section 415 authorized the Attorney General to require any noncitizen to provide his or her SSN for purposes of inclusion in any record maintained by the Attorney General or INS.

- Section 656 provided for improvements in identification-related documents; i.e., birth certificates and driver's licenses. These sections require publication of regulations which set uniform standards, including security features, and, in the case of driver's licenses, require that an SSN appear on the license. Federal agencies are precluded from accepting as proof of identity documents which do not meet the regulatory standards.
  
- Section 657 provided for the development of a prototype Social Security card. The requirements are the same as in Section 111 of the Welfare reform legislation (described above) with the exception that the Comptroller General is also to study and report to Congress on different methods of improving the Social Security card application process.

**AUTHORIZED USES OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS (SSNs)**

| <b><u>SSN USES</u></b>   | <b><u>YEAR</u></b> |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. Federal components use exclusively for employees  | 1943               |
| 2. Civil Service Commission use as employee identifier   | 1961               |
| 3. Internal Revenue Service use as taxpayer identification   | 1962               |
| 4. Department of Defense use as Armed Forces identifier  | 1967               |
| 5. Issue SSNs to: legally admitted aliens at US entry and anyone receiving or applying for Federal benefits  | 1972               |
| 6. AFDC use for eligibility  | 1975               |
| 7. States use for tax, general public assistance, and drivers' licenses purposes   | 1976               |
| 8. Food Stamp use for household members for eligibility  | 1977               |
| 9. School Lunch use for adult household members for eligibility  | 1981               |
| 10. Selective Service System use for draft registrants   | 1981               |
| 11. Federal loan program use for applicants  | 1982               |
| 12. Require for all holders of interest-bearing accounts   | 1983               |
| 13. States authorized to require for AFDC, Medicaid, unemployment compensation, food stamp programs, and State programs established under a plan approved under title I, X, XIV, or XVI of the Social Security Act | 1984               |
| 14. May be used as proof of employment eligibility   | 1986               |

| <u>SSN USES</u>  | <u>YEAR</u> |
|--|-------------|
| 15. Require for taxpayer identification for tax dependents age 5 and over (effective for 1988 returns)           | 1986        |
| 16. Secretary of Transportation use for commercial motor vehicle operators' licenses                             | 1986        |
| 17. Require for taxpayer identification for tax dependents age 2 and over (effective for 1990 returns)           | 1988        |
| 18. State use parents' SSN to issue birth certificates   | 1988        |
| 19. States and/or blood donation facilities use for blood donors identification                                  | 1988        |
| 20. Require all Title II beneficiaries to have SSN for eligibility   | 1988        |
| 21. National Student Loan Data System to include SSN of borrowers  | 1989        |
| 22. Require for taxpayer identification for tax dependents age 1 and over (effective for 1991 returns)           | 1990        |
| 23. Require SSN for eligibility for all Department of Veterans Affairs payments                                  | 1990        |
| 24. Require SSN of officers of food and retail stores that redeem Food Stamps                                    | 1990        |
| 25. Authorize use of SSN for jury selection  | 1994        |
| 26. Authorize use of SSN by Department of Labor for claim identification number for workers' compensation claims | 1994        |
| 27. Require for taxpayer identification for tax dependents regardless of age (effective for 1996 returns)        | 1994        |

SSN USESYEAR

- |     |   |      |
|-----|---|------|
| 28. | Require the SSN of any applicant for a professional license, commercial driver's license, occupational license, or marriage license be recorded on the application. The SSN of any person subject to a divorce decree, support order, or paternity determination or acknowledgement would have to be placed in the pertinent records. SSNs are required on death certificates | 1996 |
| 29. | Authorize the Attorney General to require any noncitizen to provide his/her SSN for inclusion in INS records  | 1996 |
| 30. | Require driver's license to display an SSN  | 1996 |

# SOCIAL SECURITY: YOUR NUMBER

## INTRODUCTION

Many of us got our Social Security number about the time we got our first job. It was a symbol of our right to work and our responsibility to pay taxes. And, like getting a driver's license, it was symbolic of becoming an adult. Today, many parents apply for a number for their newborns even before they leave the hospital!

Just as having a Social Security number is no longer a symbol of adulthood, the number's use is no longer confined to working and paying taxes. In ever increasing numbers, government agencies, schools, and businesses rely on Social Security numbers to identify people in their computer systems. Everyone seems to want your Social Security number.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is aware of concerns about the increasing uses of the Social Security number for client identification and recordkeeping purposes. You should not use your Social Security card as an identification card. However, several other government agencies are permitted by law to use Social Security numbers, but there is no law either authorizing or prohibiting their use. Banks and other financial institutions use the numbers to report interest earned on accounts to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Other government agencies use Social Security numbers in computer matching operations to stop fraud and abuse. For example, using Social Security numbers, some state death records are matched to Medicare records to uncover Medicare and Social Security fraud.

## PRIVACY OF RECORDS

Although we can't prevent others from asking for your number, you should know that giving it to them does NOT give them access to your Social Security records. The privacy of your records is guaranteed unless 1) disclosure to another government agency is required by law or 2) the information is needed to conduct Social Security or other government health or welfare programs.

If a business or other enterprise asks you for your Social Security number, you can refuse to give it to them. However, that may mean doing without the purchase or service for which your number was requested.

Our primary message is this: be careful with your Social Security number and your card and protect their privacy whenever possible.

## THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

When Social Security began in 1935, a system was needed to keep track of the earnings, and eventually the benefits, of people who worked in jobs covered under the new program. Because many people use more than one name over a lifetime or share the same name, a numerical identifier was selected.

## WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

The nine-digit Social Security number is divided into three parts. The first three numbers generally indicate the state of residence at the time a person applies for his or her first card. Originally, the lowest numbers were assigned to the New England states, and the numbers grew progressively higher in the South and West. However, in recent years, this geographical relationship has been disrupted somewhat by the need to allocate numbers out of sequence as state populations change.

The middle two digits of a Social Security number have no special significance, but merely serve to break the numbers into blocks of convenient size. The last four characters represent a straight numerical progression of assigned numbers.

SSA has issued more than 383 million Social Security numbers, and about 6 million new numbers are assigned each year. But even at this rate, there will be no need to reissue the same numbers, revise the present system, or devise a new numbering system for several generations. For this reason, SSA plans to continue using the nine-digit number.

## TYPES OF SOCIAL SECURITY CARDS

SSA issues three types of Social Security cards. The first type of card is the card most people have, and has been issued since 1935. It shows the person's name and Social Security number, and it lets the person work without restriction. SSA issues it to U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens.

The second type of card bears the legend "NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT." SSA issues it to people from other countries who are lawfully admitted to the United States without INS work authorization, but who need a number because of a federal, state or local law requiring a Social Security number to get a benefit or service.

SSA began issuing the third type of card in 1992. It bears the legend "VALID FOR WORK ONLY WITH INS AUTHORIZATION." It is issued to people who are admitted to the United States on a temporary basis with Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) authorization to work.

## PROTECTING YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER AND RECORDS

When you work, your Social Security number is used to record your earnings. Here are some things you can do to protect your Social Security record and to make sure it is accurate.

- 1) Show your Social Security card to your employer when you start a job.
- 2) Check the name and Social Security number on your pay stub and W-2 form to make sure your name and number are correct.
- 3) Keep your card in a safe place but don't rely on your memory when furnishing your number. If you give your employer the wrong Social Security number, your earnings may get credited to some other worker.
- 4) Send for an earnings statement at least every three years to make sure your record is right. The statement is available free of charge from

including the envelope, to your local Social Security office or send the material to the Social Security Administration, Office of Communications, P.O. Box 17740, Baltimore, Maryland 21235. If you wish, you also can turn over the material to local postal authorities.

## **APPLYING FOR A NEW OR REPLACEMENT CARD**

If you need to a Social Security number or want to replace your lost or stolen card, or get a card showing your new name, call or visit Social Security. These services are free. You will need to complete an application and furnish one or more documents as identification.

You can also download Form SS-5 for a new or replacement card from this service.

To get a Social Security number, you will need to provide documents that show your identity, age, and citizenship or lawful alien status.

To replace your lost or stolen card, you usually need one identifying document. To change the name on your card, you need to show one or more documents that identify you by your old name and your new name. If you were born outside the United States, generally you also must show proof of U.S. citizenship or lawful alien status. Your replacement card will have the same number as your old card.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

You can get more information 24 hours a day by calling Social Security's toll-free number, 1-800-772-1213. You can call for an appointment or to speak to a service representative between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on business days. Our lines are busiest early in the week and early in the month so, if your business can wait, it's best to call at other times. Whenever you call, have your Social Security number handy.

If you have a touch-tone phone, recorded information and services are available 24 hours a day, including weekends and holidays. People who are deaf or hard of hearing may call our toll-free "TTY" number 1-800-325-0778, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on business days.

Social Security publications are available to users of the Internet. Type <http://www.ssa.gov> to access Internet and these publications.

The Social Security Administration treats all calls confidentially--whether they're made to our toll-free numbers or to one of our local offices. We also want to make sure that you receive accurate and courteous service. That's why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some incoming and outgoing telephone calls.

Social Security Administration  
SSA Publication No. 05-10002  
October 1996