MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

INFORMATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT REPORT

Honorable Stacey E. Pickering
State Auditor
Office of the State Auditor
501 North West Street, Suite 801
Jackson, MS 39201

April 6, 2010

Dear Mr. Pickering:

MSDH takes the responsibility to protect the integrity of the information and the information gathering processes in its possession seriously and is taking steps to correct those deficiencies discovered in the recent OSA IS Audit. The Health Informatics section is working with upper level management and ITS to develop a comprehensive plan that will meet or exceed IS audit compliance standards.

MSDH welcomes the opportunity to work with the Office of the State Auditor to improve the efficiency of services we provide for the citizens of Mississippi.

AUDIT FINDINGS:

Auditing Finding 1 – MDH Should Provide for Regular HIPAA Related Network Security Reviews

MSDH Response:

IT has assigned system security to an individual under Suzy Wheeler. She is reviewing the last review that was conducted and will give a status report. She has also attended security classes thru ITS. We have also been talking with the Pilium Group to do an audit. They are on ITS's contract list. Once we do our internal review we will contract with Pilium to do a follow up. We will then continue this process on a regular basis.

Audit Finding 2 – MDH Should Re-Activate the Computer Room Fire Suppression System

MSDH Response:

The MSDH Data Center is currently in an ongoing state of change. During a typical business day the Data Center is being accessed by many different staff members who are likely to be moving equipment out or moving equipment in. They may also be performing cleanup duties such as

rearranging data cables and/or equipment. With this much activity within the Data Center it is very likely that dust and other debris will be stirred up into the air within the room. The Halon fire suppression system in the Data Center is sensitive to debris in the air as well as smoke and heat. False alarms and accidental triggers of the system are increased with the amount of staff going in and out of that area on a daily basis.

The Data Center still has several pieces of equipment that need to be removed. Prior to engaging the Halon system, a thorough professional cleaning of the Data Center needs to be performed to make sure we get as much dust and debris out of there as possible. We would also need to restrict personnel access to the Data Center. The staff responsible for managing the Data Center will also need to be re-trained on the usage of the Halon system. We currently have fire extinguishers inside and immediately outside of the Data Center. The Halon system still sounds alarms in case of fire, heat, smoke and dust. However, since the cylinder is not engaged at this time it would not disperse the ingredients.

If an accidental dispersal of the cylinder were to take place, the Data Center would be out of commission for several days if not longer. A professional cleanup crew with experience in handling a release of Halon would need to be brought in. Refilling the cylinder after its released is also very expensive.

The Health Informatics staff responsible for the Data Center is working toward having the areas cleaned out and ready to engage the Halon system by the end of the year.

Audit Finding 3 – MDH Should Establish Policies and Procedures for Active Directory Account Management

MSDH Response:

Several Health Informatics staff members have been actively working on improving the way user accounts within the Active Directory are managed. We are also working on a design and plan to streamline the way adds/deletes/and changes are done within the directory. One of the primary goals is to develop tools and outline processes whereby Human Resources is the starting and ending point for managing user accounts in Active Directory. The Office of Health Informatics is also beginning dialog with outside vendors who are experts in Active Directory design to evaluate our existing Active Directory structure and to make recommendations for changes that will make the structure more streamlined and efficient.

Mary Currier, MD, MPH
State Health Officer