



Press Release

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Audit Finds Social Security Administration’s Employees Did Not Always Document Reasons for Removing Beneficiaries’ Incorrect Death Postings

The Social Security Administration (SSA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) released an audit report, [Beneficiaries Incorrectly Recorded as Deceased](#) (032311). The audit examined whether SSA employees complied with Agency policies when correcting the records of living beneficiaries who were incorrectly recorded as deceased.

To administer the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance and Supplemental Income programs, SSA collects death information using the Numident as its official source of death information. SSA’s Numident is SSA’s master database of Social Security number assignments and associated identity records. SSA records all recipients’ deaths in its Death Master File (DMF). As required by law, SSA shares the DMF with other Federal agencies and external entities, which use the DMF to match records and prevent fraud. SSA reported it posted approximately 5.6 million death records to the DMF in Calendar Year 2025. Of those, SSA subsequently determined that 12,504 records—or 0.22 percent—were erroneous.

SSA records incorrect deaths when (1) a technician makes an administrative error, such as manually inputting a wrong Social Security number or beneficiary identification codes from legitimate death reports; or (2) the Agency receives erroneous death reports, such as a report from a beneficiary’s representative payee or relative, someone acting on the beneficiary’s behalf, other government agencies, or financial institutions.

The OIG reviewed a random sample of beneficiaries whom SSA recorded as deceased between January 2020 and December 2024 and later removed the death records from the Numident (and thereby removing such records from the DMF). Auditors found that, when SSA technicians corrected 45 percent of the incorrect death records, they did not document why the deaths were recorded in the first place, or why they were subsequently removed, as required by Agency policy.

When technicians do not adequately document SSA’s records, the Agency does not have information to respond to beneficiaries’ inquiries or address future actions on the beneficiaries’ records, such as subsequent death reports. SSA also cannot identify trends or root causes for why it recorded living beneficiaries as deceased so it can develop corrective actions to prevent future errors.

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“Strengthening guidance and ensuring consistent documentation are essential for SSA to enhance its accountability, transparency, and service to beneficiaries,” said Michelle L. Anderson, Assistant Inspector General for Audit as First Assistant. “The audit demonstrates that the Agency should clarify all policies and procedures related to when and where its employees must document the reasons for death removals and any associated actions taken to remove incorrect death records.”

The full report can be found [here](#).

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