



Press Release

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Report: SSA Inconsistent in Addressing Death Data Across Agency Records

Recent audit shows an estimated 595,000 records still need updates

The Social Security Administration (SSA) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that problems persist with the death information in the Social Security Administration's electronic database (Numident – SSA's computer database file on all who have applied for a Social Security Number), according to a report, [Follow-up on Deceased Beneficiaries and Recipients with No Death Information on the Numident \(A-09-20-50936\)](#). In the report, SSA OIG evaluated the effectiveness of SSA's controls over the recording of death information and reexamined the issues it found with the database in 2015.

Despite process improvements related to stopping payments to deceased beneficiaries, the report evaluated the accuracy of recording death information and estimated that SSA did not record death information in the Numident database for approximately 14,818 deceased beneficiaries. Inaccurate death information in the Numident database has far-reaching effects. SSA shares its death data with government and non-government entities and inaccurate death information can impact wage reports, voter verification, and other federal and state agencies' programs and services.

The audit also reviewed SSA's response to previous issues with the database. In 2015, SSA OIG identified approximately 1.4 million records requiring death information, as well systematic issues with the database. In response, SSA implemented a centralized death information processing system and instituted a project to identify and resolve deceased beneficiaries' missing death information. Despite SSA's efforts, the recent audit shows that 595,514 records remain uncorrected.

"It's critical that accuracy and consistency within SSA's records remain a priority, and our work in this area helps to ensure that it does," said Gail S. Ennis, Inspector General for the Social Security Administration. "My office will continue to identify problems and recommend solutions so that Social Security's data and information remains a reliable and vital resource for certain programs and services."

SSA OIG made four recommendations to SSA; three recommendations related to correcting records identified as inaccurate and one recommendation addressed the systemic issue with

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the database. Specifically, SSA OIG recommended that SSA only allow employees to record the date of death on the centralized death information processing system, ensuring that the information transfers to all applicable databases, including the Numident. SSA agreed with three of the four recommendations. See the [full report here](#).

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