Two-Factor Authentication Is Coming to a USDA Laptop Near You
LincPass + PIN Are All You Need

Why Do I Need A LincPass?

As a Federal employee or contractor, you will soon need your LincPass to gain access to buildings and systems for which you are authorized. The rollout will start with employees and contractors who have laptops that access USDA resources, and then to desktop systems. For the transition period, you may have two cards, the LincPass plus a proximity card that gives you access to your work location. In the future, without a LincPass, you may not be able to enter certain buildings, or will be need to be registered as a guest.

What's a LincPass?

As part of ensuring national security, Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12) mandates that Federal agencies screen their employees and contractors and issue credentials—"smartcards"— that meet National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) guidelines by October 2008. In USDA, the smartcard is known as a LincPass. If you don't already have one, your Agency will be communicating with you soon on the sponsorship, enrollment, and activation process.

LincPass
simple. smart. secure.

What Information About Me Is Stored on the LincPass?

The LincPass shows your picture, your name, your agency, card expiration date, and serial number, and whether or not you are an Emergency Response Official. The card's chip (the part that makes it a "smartcard") stores a Personal Identification Number (PIN), some fingerprint data, and digital certificates for authentication and encryption.

How Do I Use My LincPass?

You'll need a card reader and software installed on your laptop. Your agency's network will also have to be "HSPD-12 enabled" so your card will work. Once that happens, instead of typing in your user ID and password, you'll put your card in the reader and enter your PIN to authenticate. Because the LincPass is a more powerful credential, and expensive and time-consuming to replace, you should guard your card as you would your driver's license or key to your home.

What Is Two-Factor Authentication?

Authentication can be based on what you know, such as a password or a PIN, what you have, such as a LincPass, or what you are, such as biometric data (like a fingerprint). "Two-factor authentication" means using a two of these authentication methods (LincPass + PIN) to increase the assurance that you are authorized to access USDA systems. USDA is implementing two-factor authentication for laptops first because of the inherent security risks in mobile computers, to make it more difficult for unauthorized persons to use a "found" laptop to access USDA systems.

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