

# Defense Nuclear Security Lessons Learned Center

*Sharing Experiences to  
Ensure National Security*



**NASA**  
National Nuclear Security Administration

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## IMPROPERLY SECURED CLASSIFIED SLIDES

Work environment, human nature, task demands, and individual capabilities are the four general categories of precursors to human error. This **CSI** illustrates how time pressure (task demands) and stress (human nature) contributed to an error that fortunately did not result in a serious security incident.

### CASE

Anne was tasked to develop and deliver a classified briefing about a project on which she was working. The briefing was previously assigned to another worker, but Anne's supervisor asked her to take responsibility for the presentation, which was to be delivered later that day. Anne was able to rearrange her schedule so she could deliver the briefing at the afternoon meeting before she left for a scheduled medical appointment. Anne developed a presentation consisting of 23 viewgraphs, five of which were classified. Later, as she was preparing her materials at the meeting, Anne decided she did not need two of the classified slides she had created. Anne set aside the two classified slides and did not use them as she delivered the presentation. When the meeting ended, Anne realized that she was running late for her appointment. As she hurriedly gathered up her presentation materials, Anne gave the classified slides from her presentation to Sam, a properly cleared coworker, and asked him to make sure that the material was properly protected and stored. She put the unclassified slides in her portfolio, which she took with her as she rushed to her appointment. Sam paged Anne about two minutes after she left the meeting. Anne called Sam immediately and learned that two of the classified slides were not in the packet he had taken back to the office. Anne checked her portfolio and found that when she picked up her unclassified slides she had also grabbed the two classified slides she set aside before delivering her briefing. Anne immediately returned to the office and properly secured the classified slides.

### SECURITY CONCERN

Improperly packaged or protected classified information outside a Security Area can easily be compromised. Because Anne did not know she was carrying classified matter, she was not able to properly protect it. In this situation, the classified slides could have been lost, stolen, or disclosed. Sam's attention to detail and prompt action prevented Anne's error from becoming an unauthorized disclosure of classified information. Sam mitigated this incident by accounting for all of the classified slides in the presentation and immediately contacting Anne when he noticed a discrepancy.

EVER WONDER WHAT EVENTS  
LEAD UP TO A  
SECURITY INCIDENT?  
**CSI** CAN UNRAVEL THE  
CLUES.

## CSI: CONTEMPLATING SECURITY INCIDENTS

EXPLAINING WHAT A  
SECURITY INCIDENT IS  
AND HOW IT UNFOLDS.

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## CAUSAL ANALYSIS

- Anne was hurried by conflicting personal and professional obligations. The stress of delivering a briefing on short notice, attending an unexpectedly long meeting, and trying to get to a medical appointment caused Anne to be less careful than usual.
- Anne did not take the time to properly separate her classified materials. Anne would have avoided the situation if she had given Sam all of her presentation materials to return to the office.

## CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

- Anne received counseling on the importance of taking the proper time to properly protect classified information.
- Anne discussed the matter at her group meeting to warn her coworkers of the dangers of hurrying with classified matter.

## INFRACTION

A security infraction was not issued to Anne because:

- the incident was immediately self-reported through the appropriate channels to the inquiry officials;
- Anne had not received a security infraction in the two years prior to this incident;
- the incident did not significantly affect security interests because the material was in a closed container and only off-site for about two minutes; and
- Anne cooperated fully in the inquiry.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Take the time to handle classified matter properly. Taking shortcuts may put classified matter at risk and lead to an unauthorized disclosure of classified information and a security incident.
- If you are in a rush or in case of an emergency, ask a coworker with the required clearance and need to know to double check your classified work.
- Make sure that all classified matter is accounted for before you leave a classified meeting.
- Ensure that all classified matter is properly marked and packaged before it is hand-carried outside of a Security Area.

**ADDITIONAL NOTE:** Text and images on slides or paper can transfer to plastic sheet protectors. If you use sheet protectors for classified slides or documents, be sure to protect and destroy the sheet protectors when you are done using them just as you would with any classified matter.