



Home and Off-Site Use of University-Owned or Held Hardware

Advisory Number 4

Last revised: 07 Feb. 1996

Topic:

The question of guidelines and restrictions on UF employees (faculty and staff) taking University-owned or held (leased, lent by vendor) hardware off-site arises frequently.

Example:

A variety of UF employees has convincing, work-related reasons to have University-owned computer hardware off-site. A typical request is for faculty use in an office at home. Another is for a "loaner" machine to be checked out for use while on official travel for the University.

Resources used in formulating the Advisory:

- Advisory memo developed by the Office of the Dean of the College of Medicine (with thanks for their work and permission to use it here in edited form)
- Review of the Administrative Affairs Handbook on Business Practices

Premises:

- University-owned or leased hardware clearly is state property.
- There are well-codified procedures for taking state property off-site
- Hardware lent to the University by a vendor under a research contract is probably best handled to the same standards of care as state property. An exception would be the case in which the research contract is more restrictive.

Conclusions:

- Usual property procedures should be followed; the only real issue is the details of implementation.
- Among the major implementation details are matters of insurance, personal liability, and accountability (record keeping).

Implementation:

Insurance -

The State of Florida self-insures its property. There are limitations on this self-insurance about which you may know already if your unit has UF property such as computers and printers at non-UF sites. The summary is that the State self-insures items which carry a UF property decal against fire and direct lightning strikes while that property is located at an official business location. Theft and other damage that occurs at an official business location is NOT covered by the state.

When state property is located at a non-state site for more than 24 hours, that off-site property is not covered by State self-insurance. In such instances the person to whom the property was lent has personal responsibility for any loss of or damage to the State property. Damage is defined as limited to that which is beyond normal wear and tear.

Some homeowner's and/or tenant's insurance policies do not automatically cover computer equipment. If covered, there may be exclusions for equipment not owned by the homeowner or tenant. Therefore, OITS suggests, strongly, that each person who borrows UF computing equipment for more than 24 hours be informed that s/he assumes personal responsibility for the items borrowed. Since UF REQUIRES (see below) that a certification letter be retained for property taken off-site, it is highly advisable that the signer of that letter be notified of insurance and liability issues right in the letter.

Official Travel -

Conferences and UF-sponsored functions, including travel to and from such events, are considered official business. Property taken to such events is covered by State self-insurance. Therefore, if an employee takes a UF laptop computer to a conference s/he is attending on the part of UF, that machine would be covered during travel to the conference, at the hotel, and during return travel. However, if the laptop subsequently were to be taken to the employee's home over the weekend, the State coverage would not apply while the machine was at the employee's home.

Apparently the general guideline is that during those intervals when an employee is covered by worker's compensation, any UF property s/he possesses in pursuit of his/her duties also is covered by the State's self-insurance and the employee has no personal liability for the property therefore.

Record Keeping -

Each unit is required to keep records for all UF property that has been moved away from a designated UF workplace. This record is in the form of a certification letter to the borrower. It should itemize the property involved, list the relevant UF property decal number(s), and the acquired cost of each item. The record also must include the name and address of the borrower, and the location at which the State property is to be located.

The certification letter should include the following statement followed by a signature line for the borrower:

"I certify that the property listed above is in my possession and is not available for scanning. I understand that property located in personal residences or other non-State sites is not insured for loss or damage by the University of Florida. "

The certification letter must be signed by both the borrower and the accountable officer for the unit to which the property is decaled. Each department has a designated property records officer who should be familiar with these certification letters and who should be informed as any changes in these requirements are made.

Copies of all certification letters must be forwarded to the Property Records Office.

"Checkout" Items -

Items which are lent frequently for short periods of time can be recorded on a checkout sheet rather than by issuance of individual certification letters each time the item is checked out. An example of this situation might be a laptop computer which is checked out to members of the unit on an as-needed basis.

The checkout sheet must contain a description of the item(s), relevant UF decal number(s) and acquired cost(s), and the statement quoted statement above in the section entitled "Record Keeping." The borrower's name, checkout date, return date, and borrower's signature must also be logged. It is recommended STRONGLY, that there be a clear statement at the top of each log sheet regarding the borrower's liability for the property while it is in his/her possession. For example:

"The borrower personally assumes responsibility for loss of or damage to this equipment while it is checked out to him/her and located away from an official business site."

The unit must keep these sheets on file for auditing purposes. Copies of the sheets do not need to be forwarded to the Property Records Office, however.