

VA ID CARD ALERT: CARDS CONTAIN SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS EMBEDDED IN BAR CODE

The VA ID cards issued to veterans when they enroll in the VA health care system contain their Social Security numbers embedded in the bar code. The code can be read by many bar code readers.

The VA has known about this security problem for quite some time.

https://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/access/veteran_identification_card.asp

The VA will begin mailing veterans new cards beginning in January or February 2014. It is not known how long it will take to mail new cards to the millions of veterans who are currently enrolled in the VA health care system.

Until a new card is received, veterans should protect their VA ID card and only use it when attending an appointment at VA medical facilities. Once the new card is received, veterans are advised to destroy the old card by shredding or cutting it up (cutting between the lines of the bar code, not through them).

Veterans Identification Card:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides eligible Veterans a Veterans Identification Card (VIC) for use at VA Medical Facilities. The VIC protects the privacy of Veterans' sensitive information, as it no longer displays the Social Security Number or Date of Birth on the front of the card. The VIC will only display the Veteran's name, picture, and special eligibility indicators - Service Connected, Purple Heart and Former POW, if applicable, on the front of the card. Only Veterans who are eligible for VA medical benefits will receive the card.

Purpose:

The only purpose of the card is for identification and check-in at VA appointments. The VIC cannot be used as a credit card or an insurance card, and it does not authorize or pay for care at non-VA facilities. Veterans should safeguard their VIC similar to other identification cards that contain personal information.

How do I Receive a VIC:

To receive a VIC, the Veteran must have his/her picture taken for the card at the VA Medical Facility. The card will be mailed to the Veteran within 7-10 days after the Veteran's eligibility has been verified. To ensure the VIC is received at the appropriate address, it is important that the Veteran's address is verified and the correct address is entered in the VistA computer system. If the U.S. Postal Service cannot deliver the card, it will be returned to the facility where the Veteran requested the card.

Safeguarding Your VIC:

Veterans are warned to keep their VIC safe and secure. Some bar code readers, including those available as applications on cell phones, can scan the bar code on the front of the card, and reveal the Veteran's social security number. This could make the Veteran subject to identity theft if the card is lost or stolen.

What to do if your VIC is lost or stolen:

If the VIC is lost or stolen, Veterans should contact the VA Medical Facility where they took their picture to request a new card be re-issued. Since the photo is retained, there is no need for the Veteran to go to the VA to retake a picture for the card. Identifying information such as name and other information will be asked to assure proper identification of the caller.

New VIC:

The new VIC Card was introduced in 2004 to reduce Veterans' vulnerability to identity theft and to demonstrate the VA's commitment to securing the confidential personal information of enrolled Veterans. Veterans with the old and outdated version of the VIC (which displays the Social Security Number and the Date of Birth), must replace the card with the new card. Veterans with the old card should report to their local VA Medical Facility to have a new card issued. Veterans should dispose of the old card in a secure manner by cutting up the card or shredding the card.

What to do if you do not receive your Card:

If the Veteran does not receive the card in the 7-10 day timeframe, the Veteran should contact the local VA Medical Facility where the card was requested or call VA at 1-877-222-VETS (8387)