

VA STANDARD DESKTOP CONFIGURATIONS

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This directive establishes that there will be a VA-wide corporate software suite and a range of acceptable hardware configurations, and how that information will be published. It also establishes a four-year refresh cycle for all office automation workstations. This directive does not apply to asynchronous terminals or thin-client devices. Use of these devices will be considered on a project by project basis as part of the standard Information Technology (IT) project oversight process.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS: This directive sets forth the policies and responsibilities for implementing and complying with VA Standard Desktop Configurations, hereinafter referred to, as “standard desktop”. The Directive contains:

a. A definition of the VA-wide corporate software suite and a range of acceptable hardware configurations. Specifics of both the software suite and the acceptable hardware configurations will be published on a web site and updated periodically.

b. A definition of the responsibility for all VA facilities to develop plans to implement a four-year refresh cycle for all office automation workstations.

c. Waiver instructions for organizations that are unable to comply with the standard desktop requirements.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Information Technology Support Service (ITSS), Office of Information and Technology, is responsible for the material contained in this directive.

2. RELATED HANDBOOK: None.

3. RESCISSION: None.

CERTIFIED BY:

/s/
John A. Gauss
Assistant Secretary
for Information and Technology

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

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1. PURPOSE

a. The Department of Veterans Affairs has various hardware and software configurations for office automation desktops throughout VA organizations. Lack of standardization increases the complexity of designing and implementing centralized systems and standardized security policies. In addition, office automation workstations are procured with various technology refresh cycles, with some upgraded every year and others upgraded upon failure.

b. This directive establishes a four-year technology refresh cycle for all office automation workstations, to optimize and maintain the standard desktop environment and to facilitate management of the VA IT portfolio. It also establishes a method for developing and publishing standard configurations for office automation desktops throughout VA. This directive does not apply to asynchronous terminals or thin-client devices. Use of these devices will be considered on a project by project basis as part of the standard Information Technology (IT) project oversight process.

2. POLICY

a. **Standard Software Configuration.**

(1) The VA corporate office automation software suite will be developed consistent with the VA Enterprise Architecture and other information technology (IT) strategic documents. The corporate office automation software suite will consist of a standard operating system, a suite of office automation software, the corporate anti-virus software product, one or more terminal emulation packages to interface with VA legacy systems and any other client software packages deemed necessary for VA-wide initiatives.

(2) The corporate office automation software suite will always consist of commercial off-the-shelf products. The published corporate office automation software suite will include only products available for purchase, not beta or pre-release versions of software. Unless there are compelling business needs, a new product will only be acceptable after commercial release of the first service release.

(3) The specific components of the corporate office automation software suite will be approved by the VA CIO, based upon recommendations from the VA IT Enterprise Work Group. These components will be reviewed, and updated if necessary, annually. The specific components of the corporate office automation software suite will be published at <http://vaww.vairm.vaco.va.gov/VADesktop>.

(4) Locally procured software packages to augment the office automation suite must have client interfaces compatible with the VA corporate office automation suite, so that it is unnecessary to purchase additional workstations to support them.

b. Standard Hardware Configurations.

(1) VA office automation workstations must be upgraded periodically to ensure that they will be able to process the latest versions of office automation software and that they are suitable for newly developed VA-wide business-line systems. Therefore, all VA administrations and offices will develop the necessary plans and procedures to ensure that all office automation workstations are upgraded or replaced to meet the requirements of this directive every four years.

(2) The VA CIO, based on the recommendations of the VA IT Enterprise Work Group, will define a range of acceptable office automation desktop hardware configurations. The range will include at least a minimum acceptable hardware configuration, a “typical” configuration and a “premium” configuration, but may also include other configurations as appropriate. The technical specifications of these hardware configurations will be reviewed, and updated as necessary, annually. The technical specifications will be published at <http://vaww.vairm.vaco.va.gov/VADesktop>.

(3) At the time of publication, four hardware configurations have been identified, as outlined below:

(a) “Minimum acceptable”. As its name implies, this hardware configuration is the minimum hardware configuration that is currently acceptable in the VA environment. The minimum bar is established to help identify the workstations most in need of immediate replacement and to provide developers with a “low-end” estimate of the speed and capacity of workstations VA-wide. Workstations that do not meet the minimum hardware configuration must be replaced within 6 months, even if they are capable of supporting the VA corporate office automation software suite.

(b) “Typical”. The typical desktop configuration will provide most customers with a standard networked office automation solution for a client-server environment. It specifically supports office automation functionality: word processing, spreadsheets, presentation graphics, database software, e-mail and calendar functions, Internet/Intranet access and interoperability software for networking the device; terminal emulation software would allow access to VA legacy and mainframe systems. Because these devices are used in a LAN environment, modems are not authorized. All new procurements of typical desktop configurations must meet or exceed the typical desktop configuration on the web site.

(c) “Laptop”. The laptop configuration will provide most customers with a standard networkable office automation solution that can be used in stand-alone mode from home or travel, or for remote access. Because laptops are used for dial-up access, they generally require a modem currently; as high-speed connectivity becomes more widely available, modems and client-server based remote access systems will eventually become unnecessary. In a LAN environment, they would use a network connection. All new procurements of laptops must meet or exceed the laptop configuration on the web site.

(d) "Premium". The premium desktop configuration will also provide a standard networked office automation solution. It includes a faster processor, more memory, more local storage and the capability for increased network throughput, all designed to support customers who need more processor-intensive functionality, including, for example, the need to manipulate large spreadsheets or databases, develop multimedia applications or perform complex desktop publishing activities. Again, since these devices are networked, a modem connection is not authorized. New procurements of premium desktops must meet or exceed the premium desktop configuration on the web site.

(4) The hardware configurations on the web site are minimum guidelines. Supervisors and managers may add additional peripherals, additional storage space or additional memory based on local needs. In addition, adaptive peripherals or software may be provided as a reasonable accommodation if the designated user of the workstation has a special need. Please note that any additional peripherals must be compatible with the VA corporate office automation software suite and the defined hardware configurations or they must be removed from the device.

c. Exceptions.

(1) Particularly during the first several years after publication of this directive, there may be situations where compliance is not possible. Administrations or offices may apply for a waiver of one or more requirements of this directive. The waiver must be fully justified and supported by the organization's Chief Information Officer (CIO), change or review board, or senior information technology (IT) official, as appropriate, before the Administration or Staff Office submits it for consideration by the VA CIO. The waiver may be in memorandum format, and must provide the following information:

(a) A brief description of the reason(s) that compliance with the VA standard desktop configurations will be delayed;

(b) Information on the adverse impact or risk of implementing the VA standard desktop configurations on critical business processes and IT resources, including those of other VA Administrations, Assistant Secretaries, outside agencies or third parties;

(c) Certification that the delayed implementation of the VA standard desktop configurations will not impact existing systems operated and maintained by other VA Administrations, Assistant Secretaries, outside agencies, third parties or private sector entities;

(d) An analysis of alternatives considered, including a financial impact statement of each; and

(e) A brief overview of the organization's plan for complying with the requirements of the directive, including a projected date for completion.

(2) The VA CIO will assess each waiver to determine the impact of the delay on other VA critical business processes, including those of outside agencies and third parties, before approving or disapproving the waiver.

d. **Security.**

(1) A minimum security standard for VA desktops will be published at <http://vaww.vairm.vaco.va.gov/VADesktop>. This security standard must be implemented on each VA desktop configuration. Local management may augment the minimum security standard with more stringent policies to meet local needs.

(2) All VA standard desktop equipment scheduled to be removed from service (surplus to Government needs, transferred to another organization, discontinued from rental/lease, exchanged, sold, or otherwise released) must have all VA software and data permanently removed from the equipment before it is released. Guidance for this removal is provided at <http://vaww.vairm.vaco.va.gov/VADesktop>.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Secretary of Veterans Affairs.** The Secretary has designated the Chief Information Officer as the senior agency official responsible for the Department's IT programs.

b. **Chief Information Officer.** The Department's Chief Information Officer (CIO) is responsible for ensuring compliance with the VA Standard Desktop Configurations. The CIO will review and evaluate compliance with this directive.

c. **Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Deputy Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials.** These officials will ensure compliance with this directive within their respective Administrations and Staff Offices, to include:

(1) Ensuring that all centrally and/or locally developed software developed for administrative and office automation purposes is compatible with the VA corporate office automation software suite;

(2) Developing implementation plans as necessary to ensure that all office automation workstations are upgraded at least once every four years; and

(3) Ensuring that appropriate waivers are forwarded to the VA CIO for processing.

d. **Director, Information Technology Support Service.** The Director, ITSS, has operational responsibility for this directive, including maintaining the web site where the specific components of the corporate office automation suite and the hardware configurations are published, and ensuring that the updates are completed as required.