

September 30, 2005

**DEPLOYMENT OF BLACKBERRY ® RESEARCH IN MOTION  
WIRELESS HANDHELD DEVICES**

**1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive provides policy for the assignment of BlackBerry ® handheld units (referred to in this Directive as “Blackberry”) to VHA staff.

**2. BACKGROUND**

a. VHA has approved the use of the Blackberry handheld wireless devices to maintain communications and connectivity capabilities for essential staff. However, the cost and messaging impact does not allow unlimited distribution. For the purposes of this Directive, a Blackberry is defined as a wireless, handheld device that allows secure wireless access to electronic mail, corporate data, telephone, and the Internet. It also has organizer features, and is individual-specific; the units cannot be shared or assigned to a group for use by different employees. *NOTE: Staff assigned a Blackberry unit are reminded that the units are intended for official government use only.*

b. Blackberry handheld wireless devices allow Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) staff to readily communicate via e-mail when out of the office on travel or attending out-of-office meetings. The ability of VA managers to immediately respond to time-sensitive information can be significant and is critical during emergency operations to support the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) necessary to ensure continued government operations.

c. Each Blackberry handheld unit creates the equivalent of five network user connections to one of VA’s Microsoft Exchange mail servers. With more than 5,000 Blackberry handhelds already in use by VA employees, future growth of Blackberry usage could create a significant burden on VA’s e-mail service. The need for a Blackberry must therefore be carefully balanced against the increasing cost and impact of these devices on VA’s budget and messaging infrastructure.

**3. POLICY:** It is VHA policy that only senior managers and essential staff who meet the criteria specified are to be assigned a Blackberry device.

**4. ACTION**

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, is responsible for ensuring that VHA Central Office Chief Officers and Senior Managers:

(1) Submit requests only on behalf of individuals who meet the established assignment criteria (see Att. B), and that the request includes VA Form 10-0433, Request for Blackberry Handheld Unit, (see Att. A) with a justification for issuance and signatures of both the individual

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and the appropriate supervisor or senior manager

(2) Compile a completed report of Blackberry handheld units deployed to staff including remote field offices under their purview to include the projected number of Blackberry devices to be deployed in the coming year. This report is to be submitted to the VHA Office of Information (OI) by October 1 of each year.

b. **Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) Directors.** VISN Directors are responsible for:

(1) Submitting requests only on behalf of individuals who meet the established assignment criteria (see Att. B), and that the request includes VA Form 10-0433, Request for Blackberry Handheld Unit, (see Att. A) with a justification for issuance and signatures of both the individual and the appropriate supervisor or senior manager

(2) Providing an annual reporting of the numbers of Blackberry handheld devices deployed and the projected numbers of Blackberry devices to be deployed in the coming year by October 1 of each year.

c. **VISN Chief Information Officer (CIO).** The VISN CIO is responsible for compiling a completed report of Blackberry handheld units deployed to VHA staff throughout the VISN and projected numbers of Blackberry devices to be deployed in the coming year by October 1 of each year, and submitting to VHA OI.

d. **Facility Directors.** Facility Directors are responsible for:

(1) Submitting requests only on behalf of individuals who meet the established assignment criteria (see Att. B), and that the request includes VA Form 10-0433, Request for Blackberry Handheld Unit, (see Att. A) with a justification for issuance and signatures of both the individual and the appropriate supervisor or senior manager

(2) Providing an annual reporting of the numbers of Blackberry handheld devices deployed and the projected numbers of Blackberry devices to be deployed in the coming year by October 1 of each year.

**5. REFERENCE:** VA Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology (005) Memo, "Blackberry Research in Motion (RIM Wireless Handheld Device Guidelines)," dated May 17, 2005.

**6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES:** The Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (10N) and the VHA Chief Health Informatics Officer (19) are responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be addressed to either 202-273-5881 or 202-273-8694.

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**7. RECISSIONS:** None. This VHA Directive expires September 30, 2010.

S/ Arthur S. Hamerschlag for  
Jonathan B. Perlin, MD, PhD, MSHA, FACP  
Under Secretary for Health

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USER INFORMATION

1. NAME (Last, First, MI)

[Empty text box for name]

2. TELEPHONE NUMBER

[Empty text box for telephone number]

3. JOB TITLE

[Empty text box for job title]

4. OFFICE/SECTION

[Empty text box for office/section]

5. MAIL CODE

[Empty text box for mail code]

6. JUSTIFICATION FOR ISSUANCE OF BLACKBERRY HANDHELD UNIT

[Large empty text box for justification]

I understand that if I am assigned a Blackberry Handheld Unit for use, I will be required to adhere to VA and VHA privacy and security requirements. In accordance with VA Office of Cyber and Information Security requirements, the Blackberry power-on password will:

- 1. Be changed every 90 days
- 2. Meet the definition of a strong password

DATE

[Empty text box for date]

SIGNATURE OF REQUESTOR

I hereby endorse this request based on the justification stated above.

DATE

[Empty text box for date]

SIGNATURE OF SENIOR MANAGER/SUPERVISOR

THIS REQUEST IS  APPROVED  DISAPPROVED

DATE

[Empty text box for date]

SIGNATURE OF CHIEF OFFICER, VISN DIRECTOR , FACILITY DIRECTOR OR DESIGNEE

**ATTACHMENT B**

**ASSIGNMENT CRITERIA**

1. Senior managers whose position requires above average travel, have significant program responsibilities, and whose access to a Blackberry while out of office or not on station would be of significant benefit to the organization; or
2. Essential staff whose position requires above average travel, have significant program responsibilities, whose access to a Blackberry while out of office or not on station would be of significant benefit to the organization, and who have the endorsement of their supervisors; or
3. Veterans Health Administration (VHA) staff assigned significant emergency preparedness responsibilities; or
4. Staff whose duties involve protecting the physical safety of the general public and/or other VA employees; or
5. Staff whose duties require additional protection for the employee in potentially hazardous working conditions; or
6. Staff whose duties directly impact VHA's capability to provide a time-sensitive response to a request for medical care and/or executive and legislative inquiries.