

# MSA Computer Support Newsletter

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## Computer Support Newsletter Audience

A note to our many readers.....This newsletter is published mainly to inform MSA employees of Information Technology (IT) news and happenings. Much of the newsletter will relate to the local user base. If you are NOT at Stoneville, some of the contained items may not be relevant to you

Email all questions and comments to:  
[MSA-Helpdesk@ars.usda.gov](mailto:MSA-Helpdesk@ars.usda.gov)

## Basic Windows Training

Have you ever talked to someone who knew a lot about computers? They try to be helpful, but often times they'll talk to you based on the assumption that *EVE-RYONE* knows the basics of Windows! We know that's not necessarily true.

Did you know that you can brush up on your Windows skills and learn new ones using Windows built in Help and Support? When you click on Help and Support, one of the topics listed is Windows Basics. Windows Basics covers topics like:

- Customizing your Desktop and Start Menu
- Working with Files and Folders

- Working with Programs
- Managing Windows
- Searching for Information
- Protecting your Files and Computers

Whether you are a beginner or an advanced computer user, you are sure to find the Windows Basic section fascinating. It's packed with useful, easy-to-understand information and clear, step-by-step instructions. Take a look at it today.

You can find screen shoots on how to access Windows Basics at: <http://msa.ars.usda.gov/computerhelp/newsletter/2006/july.htm>

## Password Best Practices

**A password should be like a toothbrush. Use it every day; change it regularly; and DON'T share it with friends.** For most of us this is easier said than done.

At last count, USDA and ARS had over 20 different systems requiring at least 15 different passwords. Now, I know we don't all use every system, but for most of us, it's hard enough to remember one username and password (especially after a wonderful weeks vacation). It's even more complicated when there's 3, 5, 10 or more different systems, each requiring UNIQUE usernames and passwords, each expiring at different intervals and each having different complexity rules.

Here's a few tips to help you manage your credentials more effectively:

- Set Groupwise reminders to change your passwords before they expire
- Instead of changing 5 passwords at 5 different intervals, determine the shortest interval and change all 5 passwords on the same day. Hint: This is usually every 30 days.
- **Do Not** use the same password for all systems, but you can make remembering 10 different passwords easier if you use 1 rule set. Click [here](#) for more details.

Read more on password security in the [April 2004](#) newsletter.

## Area / Agency News

Summer has proven to be a busy season for USDA, ARS and MSA. During the month of June, ARS launched two new systems. In July, USDA began enforcing a more stringent IT security policy and mandated another AgLearn training class. Here in the Area Office, we are not only supporting these issues, but also gearing up for the upcoming email migration. Read on to get more information on all that's going on.

### IAS

The Integrated Acquisition System (IAS) is a web-based e-procurement and contract management tool. It provides ARS with access to the USDA corporate administrative system offering:

- Enterprise Business Process Standardization
- Electronic requisitioning through payment and contract close-out
- Interfaces to FFIS and FPDS-NG
- Potential future interfaces to CPAIS and other administrative systems

A dedicated helpdesk has been established at GWCC for any questions related to IAS. Mike Magee, IBM, is available to assist with IAS questions. He can be reached at 301-504-4383 (Mon - Wed) and 703-485-9529 (Thurs - Fri). Mike will be available 8-5 EST.

Mike should be your first stop for answering questions. He will coordinate any questions he is unable to answer through the Department's helpdesk for you.

### eForms

June 26, 2006 marked the official launch date of eForms for the Mid South Area.

eForms (Electronic forms) is an ARS system replacement for INFORMS. Forms may be accessed from any computer that has internet access and are saved to a user folder on the eForms server. No license is required.

Note the following requirements, if you plan to use eForms:

1. User must have an Active Directory ID and password to access eForms (see side panel).
2. User must have Adobe Reader 5.0 or higher to run the application.
3. User must have Microsoft Internet Explorer version 5.5 or higher

**InForms database records will not be**

**migrated**, therefore, please print any forms that you may need for future reference.

Once eForms is fully implemented, the IT staff will no longer support INFORMS.

The URL to get to eForms is: <https://reeforms.ars.usda.gov/REEForms> .

If operational problems are encountered, the user should contact ADB at [ARIS@ars.usda.gov](mailto:ARIS@ars.usda.gov) with EFORMS in the subject line, and the issue will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

All username or password questions should be directed to [MSA\\_Helpdesk@ars.usda.gov](mailto:MSA_Helpdesk@ars.usda.gov) .

You can find more info on eForms at <http://msa.ars.usda.gov/computerhelp/eForms>

### eForms Training

August 8 - 12pm - 1pm

August 9 - 12pm - 1pm

See your LAO for location

### Single Signon

ARS is moving to a "single signon" environment. **Single Signon uses ONE ID and ONE password for many accesses.** This ID is called an Active Directory ID.

You will use your Active Directory ID and password for Sharepoint, eForms, Outlook email (when we migrate) and for REE Directory Administration.

The user ID is in the format **arsnet\firstname.lastname**

If you require assistance with your username or password, send an email to [MSA-Helpdesk@ars.usda.gov](mailto:MSA-Helpdesk@ars.usda.gov)

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## Area / Agency News

### Peer 2 Peer (P2P) Software

**The use of Peer-to-Peer (P2P) software is prohibited on all USDA equipment and networks. USDA does not consider "Limited Personal Use Policy" defined in DR 3300-1 or ARS P&P 253.4 as justification for downloading P2P or other programs that perform those functions.**

P2P is a protocol often used to obtain freeware, shareware, and bootleg software. Some P2P applications allow computer users to directly access files from another hard drive, other types include gaming, telephony, and instant messaging applications. **P2P file sharing can potentially compromise computer systems.** The use of this software creates vulnerabilities which can be ex-

ploited by providing a means of introducing malicious code and other illegal material into a Government network. In addition, the software can allow inadvertent sharing of files by vulnerabilities or mis-configuration of the software.

**Effective July 3, 2006 any USDA IP address showing occurrences of P2P activity will be assigned an incident number by the Department and reported to the Department of Homeland Security's US-CERT.**

If you currently have this type of software installed on your government equipment, it must be removed. Should you require assistance to remove this software, please contact your local computer contact.

### USDA Privacy Basics

It is the responsibility of all of us to protect and secure our sensitive and personally identifiable information at USDA.

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to comply with the Privacy Act as well as protect its information technology systems.

The Office of Chief Information Officer (OCIO) believes that all employees and contractors should be cognizant of why and how to protect Privacy Act information.

Therefore, effective immediately **all employees and contractors are required to complete the "USDA Privacy Basics" course by September 15, 2006.**

"USDA Privacy Basics," is a web-based course in AgLearn, which teaches the Privacy Act and how protecting that data relates to the work at USDA.

**This course is in addition to the annual Security Awareness Training.**

### Email Migration

For the next several months the Area will be preparing for the migration from Novell GroupWise to Microsoft Outlook email. In an effort to make the email transition as smooth as possible, the Area IT office will send periodic emails to all employees providing instructions on what each employee needs to do to pre-

pare for the migration. Your Location or Research Unit IT Specialist/Computer Contact will be actively involved in the migration process and will be available to assist you with the pre-migration efforts.

For up-to-date information regarding the MSA email migration process, continue to read this bi-monthly IT Newsletter.

**USDA Privacy Basic**  
[course instructions](#)

#### **Email Migration** **Preparation**

As a first step in preparation for the migration to Outlook, we request that each employee who uses email:

- "Clean up" your email. Delete messages/folders that are no longer needed.
- If you have messages with large attachments, particularly .pps, .jpg, or other graphic attachments, save the attachments to your hard drive, and delete the attachments from email.
- Stop both manual and auto archiving.
- DO NOT un-archive GroupWise messages (our server storage space is limited). See your IT support contact for information on cleaning up archives.

Email all questions and comments to:  
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