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04/19/2002 03:25 PM

To: GS-W-CAmnl MTeam

cc:

Subject: Summary of responses about support of systems at home

The subject of how much and what kind of support district computer support staffs should devote to home PCs came up recently. I talked it over with Pete and sent the message below to the WR SAs. Following that I have tallied the responses and also attached the more significant comments.

I think it's an issue that needs at least guidelines, if not policy. An underlying theme in many responses was that it may be at acceptable levels now, but could grow to become a real burden without some guidance. The question is, where do we go from here?

Here is the message I sent to the WR SAs

I'd like to get an informal feeling of what's happening at sites in WR WRD in regards to computer services sections providing support for PC's at home. I'm guessing the range of activity is:

- A. Don't support home PCs in any way
- B. Support gov't systems that have been taken home by only working on them in the office.
- C. Support gov't systems at home by making house calls.
- D. Support any system used at home, even personally bought, if they bring it in to the office.
- E. Support any system used at home, even personally bought, by making house calls.

Please drop me a note on what you are doing at your site and if it's anything other than A, what impact you feel the work has on your ability to support government systems at work - e.g.,

- 1. Minor
- 2. Moderate
- 3. Major

These questions are just being asked by me to see if this area is one over which we need to be concerned and have more explicit policy. Once I get a feel for this, we can decide whether to take it to WR WRD Management and District Chiefs.

Thanks.

My scoring of the responses is a little subjective in that some sites effectively said something like "we are officially an A but really a D", or "we mostly do B but a tiny amount of C". So I judged a fractional site for those categories.

Support Level	# of Sites
A	0.5
B	5.8
C	0.5
D	3.2
E	0.0

Impact	Support Level
Minor	B D B B A B D
Moderate	B B D
Major	

Other comments:

"(B site) [Occasionally] A user will describe a problem they are having at home and we have given them advice on solving it. Also, on a rare occasions a user will call us at the office with a question."

"(B site) I also provide level D service to 2 of my users but it is limited to software and setups to permit them to do some work from home. This support is a low priority."

"(D site) I'll generally look at and help set up someone's home system but with the understanding between us that we are not officially responsible for things that might go wrong. . . . Also, there is an understanding that systems brought in from home are not high on a priority list and come behind normal District business. So far the impact has been fairly minimal and everyone seems to be happy with it. I've only done a house call once and that was too time consuming - and the consensus here is that we will not be giving that type of support."

"(B site) I suspect that if an employee had a medical emergency that required him to work at home for a short time (granted on a case-by-case basis in the District) that needed a computer, that CSU would make house calls. We have never has such an instance to date."

"(B site) [we do] provide Remote Access capability to our users, but it is the responsibility of the user to provide the computer equipment that they use at home as this remote access is viewed by management to be a privilege and is granted on a case by case basis. Some use a laptop procured for them with government funds, but the majority use their personally owned computers. We do provide written instructions on how to set up the ICA client, Reflection X and anti-virus software. These instructions are provided with a "check-out" CD that is to be returned to CSU. No other software packages are provided to home users as they have access to our WTS servers via the ICA client. The WTS servers contain valid licenses for all commonly used software in the District."

"(A site) [Officially,] our flexiplace policy states that CSS will provide no computer support for home workers. To bolster that, our flexiplace request form requires statements from the employee on the level of computer resources and support available to them at home. [But] really we're category D. If an employee wants to drag their CPU all the way into the office, I'm not going to tell them to get lost. Likewise I don't hang up if someone calls from home with a problem. ... The impact of work at home for CSS has been minor".

"(B site) We have had occasional instances where employees brought their home systems into the office for us to look at and the impact of that has been minimal. We have had occasional instances where employees brought their home systems into the office for us to look at and the impact of that has been minimal. ...

If you're asking if I think we need some type of more or less formal guidelines, I'd say yes. If/when we go to someone's home to work on a system, we place the USGS in a position of risk. Not so much for property damage and the like, but the potential is there to alienate another employee or some member of his/her family. If in the process of working on a home system, the system is damaged or the user is unhappy with the result, there may be some liability on the part of the USGS."

"(D site) We sort of fall into D. We don't make house calls but will help someone if they call us from home regardless of what they have at home...pc, mac, linux. Also, we loan out what we call the 'home_pc' CD that contains all of the free or USGS employee licensed tools such as Netscape, Lotus, NAV, McAfee, Citrix ICA, SPLUS, terraterm, StarOffice, Acrobat Reader,... so home users do not have to spend hours downloading these at dial-up speeds.

Because of the nature of the beast, the impact of supporting Windows-based machines is major. However, the additional piece to support home-based machines is minimal because the problems and solutions are relatively the same."

"(D site) We are working on employees personally purchased PCs in our office. To date, we have not been required to go to the homes of individuals to work on their home PCs, but we have had to spend a moderate amount of staff time to correct problems on those home PCs in our office. This ranges from things such as their family members downloading

things on their systems and blue screening them, to people bringing in their newly purchased systems and wanting us to help them set them up. Currently, we have only been providing these services for "key" staff members, but it still has an impact on our section because we have to stop working on WRD purchased systems, that reside in the work place, to work on home PCs.

We have spent a moderate amount of time traveling to employee's homes, that have WRD purchased PCs to work with VPN and DSL connections. We try to solve the issues via phone, but most of those employees are not IT people and we just haven't been able to walk them through the basic troubleshooting techniques. On an average we are spending 2-4 hours at these individual's homes, not to include the travel time which has been up to 2 hours one way."