



## Security Ed's Lessons Learned

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### The Near Miss

*Something good can usually come from something bad. While none of us takes pleasure in knowing that a security incident has occurred, there are lessons to be learned from it. The following is a true story from a Classified Administrative Specialist (CAS) who was gracious enough to share her experience and provide some valuable lessons learned:*

I was returning to work after a holiday. The work day started off busy, as I was having trouble with my computer, re-booting it, and so forth. Then I had a request to retrieve a classified document from the safe. I expected to be in my office for the next couple of hours, so I left the safe open after I retrieved the document. I got engrossed in my work, trying to get caught up, when a meeting reminder popped up - 15 minutes until a short meeting in another building. I don't usually have meetings on Monday morning, but I only had a couple of minutes to get over there. I told our OAA that I was going to the meeting and would be back soon, and then hurried off, concerned that I might be late. Toward the end of the meeting, a lightning bolt struck me: "OMG, I forgot to secure the safe drawer!" I rushed back. As I neared my office door, I heard voices coming from my office, and a sword went through my heart. I was to report to the Security Incident Management Program (SIMP).

SIMP began the inquiry and I wrote a statement on what had occurred. I inventoried the safe drawer, and I changed the combination. Our OAA wrote her statement - then a piece of good news. Our OAA is "Q" cleared and had been at her desk with a clear vision of my office door until shortly before the safe was discovered unattended and open. There was only a lapse of about five minutes between the time our OAA left her desk and when the open safe drawer was discovered. Most importantly, nothing was out of place in the drawer. After further investigation, it was determined that this incident would be classified as a "Near Miss" because there were mitigating factors and no compromise of information.

Here are some lessons learned from this experience:

- When you open a safe drawer, pull it out so that it is obviously open and noticeable; mine wasn't.
- Train yourself to lock those safe drawers quickly, even if you are going to be in your office.
- Don't get in a hurry and start rushing around! That's how careless mistakes happen.

If you take a couple of extra minutes to do security checks in your work area before a meeting, you won't miss much of the meeting, but you might catch an unlocked safe drawer, remember to shut off a thin client, or secure a document. Even if you don't work with a safe or classified items, take an extra minute to make sure that everything is secured before you leave your work area.

Before going on a vacation or holiday, or when coming back from being off take **extra care**, as you may be distracted, hurried, or off your normal routine. Use controls or reminders at the door of your work area that will stop you from leaving your office without securing your classified. No matter how long you've worked with classified, there's always a potential for human error, so slow down and do security checks in order to avoid a near miss or an incident.

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