

Questions and Answers - Using Common Access Cards (CAC) for Logical Access

Who does the CAC authentication requirement apply to? What is an “administrative” workstation?

In the near-term, the CAC authentication requirement only applies to users of NOAA Microsoft administrative systems. These are general-purpose systems such as managed desktops and laptops used primarily for tasks like email, word processing, and internet access. More specialized scientific or experimental systems, as well as embedded computers and process control systems, are not impacted by the December 17, 2012 deadline. We do expect that these other systems will become CAC enabled in the future. If you have questions about the requirement, please contact your local IT help desk.

When will the CAC authentication requirement begin?

NOAA offices reported that Windows administrative systems were CAC enabled by June 30, 2012. Users currently have the option to log on using either CAC and PIN or username and password. Starting on December 17, 2012, NOAA will disable existing usernames and passwords. This will require users to login with their CAC and PIN.

Why is this required? How will I benefit?

HSPD-12 requires federal employees, associates, and contractors to use an approved common identification standard for logical access to federally controlled information systems. These requirements improve network security and protect individual identities. CAC authentication will move users toward a simple single sign-on, reducing the number of complex passwords that users must remember.

Who at NOAA is responsible for CAC authentication requirements and procedures?

The requirements and procedures involve multiple NOAA entities. The Chief Administrative Officer, Chief Information Officer, and Workforce Management Director are working together to ensure the smoothest possible roll-out.

What will I need for successful CAC authentication?

To complete CAC authentication, you need to have an active CAC, a computer with a CAC reader, and know your CAC PIN number. All CAC holders chose a PIN when they initially obtained a card. To successfully authenticate, you will insert your CAC in the reader and enter your PIN when prompted.

We strongly encourage all personnel to practice CAC authentication well before the December deadline.

What if I forget to bring my CAC to work? Will I have to return home to get it before I can access my computer?

We are developing procedures to allow short-term access if you accidentally forget your CAC. Starting on December 17, please contact your local IT help desk for assistance.

What is the best source of information about obtaining a new CAC or renewing an existing one? What if I lost my CAC or I don't know my PIN? What happens if I use the wrong PIN three times in a row and get locked out of my card? What if my CAC breaks?

The NOAA Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (OCAO) hosts a website with detailed information to answer the above questions. The site includes CAC points of contact for Line and Staff Offices. For more information, please see:

http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/rpflo/facilities_operations/ncr/security_services/cac.html

My computer does not have a CAC reader. What do I do?

Please contact your local IT help desk.

After the initial roll-out, what are the next IT systems that will require CAC authentication?

All NOAA computing systems and some applications will eventually require CAC authentication. More information will be provided over time.

What about people that require logical access to NOAA facilities but don't qualify for CAC?

There are numerous NOAA visitors including scientists, affiliates, associates, guest workers, and foreign nationals that need logical access but do not qualify for CAC. We are developing an alternative authentication mechanism for these important personnel that do not qualify for CAC. If you have questions about the requirement, please contact your local IT help desk.

Will there be training for CAC authentication?

CAC authentication is very straight forward and there is no user training is required. More than 1,200 users already access administrative systems across NOAA using CAC authentication without any training. The process is intuitive and functionality is available for users to do it today.

I telework. What do I do?

You should not notice any difference associated with the December 17, 2012 requirement. Additional information will be provided as CAC-authentication is expanded over time to include applications.

Will the new requirement affect access to email or other cloud based services?

Access to NOAA email will not be affected by the December 17 requirement. Personnel accessing NOAA systems via mobile devices or from non-NOAA locations should not notice any changes.

Will CAC be used to track my computer use?

CAC is only used to verify user identification. It does not have any capacity to track computer use information. The Federal privacy policy applies.

When will CAC be used for physical access?

CAC will be used for physical access to facilities as compatible electronic card readers become available. The Office of the Chief Administrative Officer and the Office of Security will distribute information when specific implementation dates are available.