

ORO reports incident involving loss of backup tapes

A spokesman for the Official Receiver's Office (ORO) said today (January 27) that the department attaches the utmost importance to an incident involving the loss of magnetic backup tapes and expresses sincere apologies.

The ORO received a report on January 22, and confirmed upon investigation that seven magnetic backup tapes were lost during their transit from Immigration Tower to Queensway Government Offices by ORO staff on December 23, 2024, in the ordinary course of transfer, to comply with the disaster recovery backup procedures. The incident has been reported to the relevant authorities including the Hong Kong Police Force, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data, the Security Bureau and the Digital Policy Office (DPO).

As the magnetic backup tapes are stored in a locked protective case and the data therein is encrypted with AES-256 encryption which is a highly secure encryption algorithm used extensively in government and military applications, as well as by business operating in highly regulated industries. Having consulted the DPO, the ORO considers that the risk of leakage of personal data from the tapes is extremely low. Based on the current investigation, there is no evidence that the data contained on the tapes has been read or compromised. The tapes contained personal data of about 76 000 individuals, including creditors of insolvency cases and serving staff of the ORO. The ORO is sending notifications to the relevant individuals by batch.

The ORO is extremely concerned about the incident and has taken immediate action to review all transit procedures and data protection practices, and has refined the procedures with immediate effect. The ORO is also conducting a thorough investigation into the staff concerned and details of the incident, including the delay in reporting the loss to senior management. Appropriate disciplinary actions will be taken.

The ORO attaches great importance to safeguarding government property and personal privacy and has reminded staff to comply with the departmental guidelines and exercise due care in handling personal data. The ORO will also review all guidelines on data security and examine the adoption of safer and more effective backup methods and procedures.

The ORO expresses sincere apologies for the loss and for the delay in reporting the incident. For enquiries, please call the ORO at 2867 2448 or email to oroadmin@oro.gov.hk.