

14.3.4 Information Classification Facts

This lesson covers the following topics:

- Classifications of data.
- Personally identifiable information (PII).
- Government data.

Classifications of Data

Data is the lifeblood of the internet and commerce. Because of this, it is critical that data be categorized to make its protection easier. All data is not equal and some requires more care and security than others.

- Private data (not for general release to the public)
- Sensitive data (restricted even within the company that is responsible for it)
- Proprietary data (includes information that is unique and differentiates a company from its competitors)

PII Data

- Government-issued numbers (SSNs, etc.)
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers
- Financial information
 - These numbers identify individuals for government purposes.
 - Although these items are readily available, companies still need to protect them since they tie to other more important information.
 - This includes bank account numbers, credit card numbers, and other finance-related information.

Government Data

Government data classifications are used across the gamut of government agencies. This includes the six branches of the military: Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, Space Force, and Air Force. The classifications correspond to security-clearance levels used for military members, government officials, and civilian contractors. The approval process can take between 4 to 18 months depending on the level of clearance. Clearance levels allow a person to view documents commensurate with their clearance level and below so long as their job requires the viewing of such documents.

| Federal Government Data Classification | Explanation |
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| Unclassified | Data available for public use. No clearance needed. |
| Sensitive | Sensitive data is unclassified, but the government would prefer that the data not be public. |
| Confidential | Confidential data is information with limited distribution. No clearance is required. |
| Secret | The first data classification that requires a security clearance. |

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| Top Secret | The highest level of data classification. Only those with Top Secret clearance can view the documents on a need-to-know basis. |
| Top Secret Compartmentalized | This data is not anymore secret than Top Secret but has very specific and limited distribution. |

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