

Small & Medium-Sized Business Outreach

What does a business invoice have in common with email? If both are done on the same computer, a business may want to think more about computer security. Payroll, proprietary information, client or employee data – information is essential to business success. A computer failure or system breach could cost a business anything from its reputation to its competitive advantage. The small business owner who recognizes the threat of computer crime and who takes steps to deter inappropriate activities is less likely to become a victim.

The vulnerability of any one small business may not seem significant to anyone other than the owner and its employees. However, over 95 percent of all US businesses are small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), of 500 employees or less. Therefore a vulnerability common to a large percentage of all SMBs could pose a threat to our Nation's economic base. In the special arena of information security, vulnerable SMBs also run the risk of being compromised for use in crimes against the governmental or large industrial systems upon which everyone relies. SMBs cannot always justify an extensive security program, or even a single full time expert. Nonetheless, they face serious security challenges and must address security requirements based on identified needs.

The difficulty for small and medium-sized business organizations is to identify needed/cost-effective security mechanisms and to obtain training that is practical and cost effective. Such organizations also need to become more educated in terms of security, so that their limited security resources are well applied to meet the most obvious and serious threats.

To address this need, NIST, the Small Business Administration, and the FBI's InfraGard program have entered into a Co-Sponsorship Agreement for the purpose of conducting a series of regional meetings on IT security for small businesses. NIST hosts the meetings with SBA and FBI as cosponsors. The purpose of the meetings is to have individuals knowledgeable in IT security provide an overview of information security threats, vulnerabilities, and corresponding protective tools and techniques - with a special emphasis on providing useful information that small business IT personnel can apply directly or use to task contractor personnel.

The workshops are 4 hours long and cover the basics of setting up and operating an organization's information security program.

The NIST-FBI-SBA Co-Sponsorship Number is 08-7630-06.

<http://csrc.nist.gov/securebiz/>

<http://sbc.nist.gov/>

<http://www.infragard-illinois.org>

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