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Information technology — Security techniques — Code of practice for information security management

Technologies de l'information — Techniques de sécurité — Code de pratique pour la gestion de sécurité d'information

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work. In the field of information technology, ISO and IEC have established a joint technical committee, ISO/IEC JTC 1.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of the joint technical committee is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the joint technical committee are circulated to national bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the national bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO and IEC shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO/IEC 17799 was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 27, *IT Security techniques*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO/IEC 17799:2000), which has been technically revised.

A family of Information Security Management System (ISMS) International Standards is being developed within ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 27. The family includes International Standards on information security management system requirements, risk management, metrics and measurement, and implementation guidance. This family will adopt a numbering scheme using the series of numbers 27000 et seq.

From 2007, it is proposed to incorporate the new edition of ISO/IEC 17799 into this new numbering scheme as ISO/IEC 27002.

0 Introduction

0.1 What is information security?

Information is an asset that, like other important business assets, is essential to an organization's business and consequently needs to be suitably protected. This is especially important in the increasingly interconnected business environment. As a result of this increasing interconnectivity, information is now exposed to a growing number and a wider variety of threats and vulnerabilities (see also OECD Guidelines for the Security of Information Systems and Networks).

Information can exist in many forms. It can be printed or written on paper, stored electronically, transmitted by post or by using electronic means, shown on films, or spoken in conversation. Whatever form the information takes, or means by which it is shared or stored, it should always be appropriately protected.

Information security is the protection of information from a wide range of threats in order to ensure business continuity, minimize business risk, and maximize return on investments and business opportunities.

Information security is achieved by implementing a suitable set of controls, including policies, processes, procedures, organizational structures and software and hardware functions. These controls need to be established, implemented, monitored, reviewed and improved, where necessary, to ensure that the specific security and business objectives of the organization are met. This should be done in conjunction with other business management processes.

0.2 Why information security is needed?

Information and the supporting processes, systems, and networks are important business assets. Defining, achieving, maintaining, and improving information security may be essential to maintain competitive edge, cash flow, profitability, legal compliance, and commercial image.

Organizations and their information systems and networks are faced with security threats from a wide range of sources, including computer-assisted fraud, espionage, sabotage, vandalism, fire or flood. Causes of damage such as malicious code, computer hacking, and denial of service attacks have become more common, more ambitious, and increasingly sophisticated.

Information security is important to both public and private sector businesses, and to protect critical infrastructures. In both sectors, information security will function as an enabler, e.g. to achieve e-government or e-business, and to avoid or reduce relevant risks. The interconnection of public and private networks and the sharing of information resources increase the difficulty of achieving access control. The trend to distributed computing has also weakened the effectiveness of central, specialist control.

Many information systems have not been designed to be secure. The security that can be achieved through technical means is limited, and should be supported by appropriate management and procedures. Identifying which controls should be in place requires careful planning and attention to detail. Information security management requires, as a minimum, participation by all employees in the organization. It may also require participation from shareholders, suppliers, third parties, customers or other external parties. Specialist advice from outside organizations may also be needed.

0.3 How to establish security requirements

It is essential that an organization identifies its security requirements. There are three main sources of security requirements.

1. One source is derived from assessing risks to the organization, taking into account the organization's overall business strategy and objectives. Through a risk assessment, threats to assets are identified, vulnerability to and likelihood of occurrence is evaluated and potential impact is estimated.

2. Another source is the legal, statutory, regulatory, and contractual requirements that an organization, its trading partners, contractors, and service providers have to satisfy, and their socio-cultural environment.

3. A further source is the particular set of principles, objectives and business requirements for information processing that an organization has developed to support its operations.

0.4 Assessing security risks

Security requirements are identified by a methodical assessment of security risks. Expenditure on controls needs to be balanced against the business harm likely to result from security failures.

The results of the risk assessment will help to guide and determine the appropriate management action and priorities for managing information security risks, and for implementing controls selected to protect against these risks.

Risk assessment should be repeated periodically to address any changes that might influence the risk assessment results.

More information about the assessment of security risks can be found in clause 4.1 "Assessing security risks".

0.5 Selecting controls

Once security requirements and risks have been identified and decisions for the treatment of risks have been made, appropriate controls should be selected and implemented to ensure risks are reduced to an acceptable level. Controls can be selected from this standard or from other control sets, or new controls can be designed to meet specific needs as appropriate. The selection of security controls is dependent upon organizational decisions based on the criteria for risk acceptance, risk treatment options, and the general risk management approach applied to the organization, and should also be subject to all relevant national and international legislation and regulations.

Some of the controls in this standard can be considered as guiding principles for information security management and applicable for most organizations. They are explained in more detail below under the heading "Information security starting point".

More information about selecting controls and other risk treatment options can be found in clause 4.2 "Treating security risks".

0.6 Information security starting point

A number of controls can be considered as a good starting point for implementing information security. They are either based on essential legislative requirements or considered to be common practice for information security.

Controls considered to be essential to an organization from a legislative point of view include, depending on applicable legislation:

a) data protection and privacy of personal information (see 15.1.4);

b) protection of organizational records (see 15.1.3);

c) intellectual property rights (see 15.1.2).

Controls considered to be common practice for information security include:

a) information security policy document (see 5.1.1);

b) allocation of information security responsibilities (see 6.1.3);

c) information security awareness, education, and training (see 8.2.2);

d) correct processing in applications (see 12.2);

e) technical vulnerability management (see 12.6);

f) business continuity management (see 14);

g) management of information security incidents and improvements (see 13.2).

These controls apply to most organizations and in most environments.

It should be noted that although all controls in this standard are important and should be considered, the relevance of any control should be determined in the light of the specific risks an organization is facing. Hence, although the above approach is considered a good starting point, it does not replace selection of controls based on a risk assessment.

0.7 Critical success factors

Experience has shown that the following factors are often critical to the successful implementation of information security within an organization:

a) information security policy, objectives, and activities that reflect business objectives;

b) an approach and framework to implementing, maintaining, monitoring, and improving information security that is consistent with the organizational culture;

c) visible support and commitment from all levels of management;

d) a good understanding of the information security requirements, risk assessment, and risk management;

e) effective marketing of information security to all managers, employees, and other parties to achieve awareness;

f) distribution of guidance on information security policy and standards to all managers, employees and other parties;

g) provision to fund information security management activities;

h) providing appropriate awareness, training, and education;

i) establishing an effective information security incident management process;

j) implementation of a measurement [1] system that is used to evaluate performance in information security management and feedback suggestions for improvement.

[1] Note that information security measurements are outside of the scope of this standard.

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