Busy Season at NIST
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Studying information assurance through effective statistical research methods is difficult: people often don’t notice computer security breaches until long after they have occurred (or not at all) or they are reluctant to report these breaches – and anyway, there is no centralized agency to collate such incident reports.

In the absence of clear analytical information, we are often thrown back upon “best practices.” These compendia of common sense, industry standards, and opinions of security experts are as close as we get to strict standards in our field.

Anyone interested in helping to define best practices in information assurance can turn to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Computer Security Resource Center (CSRC) of the Computer Security Division (CSD) <http://csrc.nist.gov/publications/drafts.html>. That’s where the Draft Publications are posted for comment.

The months of July and August have been a busy season for the contributors to these drafts. The list of new titles is unusually long:

- Jul 06, 2005: Draft Special Publication 800-56, Recommendation for Pair-Wise Key Establishment Schemes Using Discrete Logarithm Cryptography (Comments were due Aug 19)
- Aug 10, 2005: Draft NIST Special Publication 800-87, Codes for the Identification of Federal and Federally-Assisted Organizations (Comments due Sep 8)
- Aug 11, 2005: Draft NIST Special Publication 800-40 Version 2, Creating a Patch and Vulnerability Management Program (Comments due Sep 12)
- Aug 11, 2005: Draft NIST Special Publication 800-81, Secure Domain Name System (DNS) Deployment Guide (Comments due Sep 29)
- Aug 11, 2005: Draft NIST Special Publication 800-83, Guide to Malware Incident Prevention and Handling (Comments due Sep 19)
Readers interested in being notified of new security publications from NIST should sign up for alerts at <http://csrc.nist.gov/compubs-mail.html>.

I’ll be looking at some of these Draft Publications in more detail in upcoming columns.

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