

UK government launches the IT Security Awareness for Everyone website

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ITsafe, a new initiative to protect home computer users and micro businesses from [viruses](#) and other threats online, was launched on Wednesday 23 February by the UK Government. The IT Security Awareness for Everyone website – www.itsafe.gov.uk – offers free advice as well as virus and threat alerts allowing computer users to surf the net and send and receive emails more safely.

The service, a Home Office funded initiative, uses information provided by the National Infrastructure Security Co-ordination Centre (NISCC) - the Government's centre for electronic defence. It aims to reassure users by advising them on how best to protect their personal and business data.

Home Office Minister Hazel Blears said: "There is a clear need for easy-to-understand and simple independent advice for non-technically minded people who use computers either at home or at work. The purpose of this new Government service is to ensure computer users are aware of the risks involved and how to deal with them easily and effectively without causing alarm.

"Use of the Internet in homes and small businesses across the country has increased dramatically. Government statistics have shown that more than half of all households own a home computer and in 2004 it was estimated that almost 13 million of these were able to access the net. Many of us use the web and send emails every day without a second thought but there are risks and dangers we should be aware of.

“Every day more and more viruses make their way on to the Internet and into people’s home computers, arriving with little or no warning with the potential to corrupt, wipe out or steal valuable data. “Defending yourself against this type of threat is where ITsafe comes in. Signing up to this service will give users an extra level of defence in two key ways; by providing general advice on IT security and issuing official alerts if and when it is felt there is a serious enough threat from a particular virus or other form of threat.”

To sign up users can simply visit the website where they will be asked to provide their email address. For those who prefer, a text message service to a mobile phone is also available. Alerts will consist of an email or text outlining specific threats and what damage they can do. Users will then be directed to clear, step-by-step advice on how to respond and therefore maximise the security of their computers, software and personal or business data.

Roger Cumming, Director of NISCC, said: “In our work we deal with threats to the Critical National Infrastructure – those computer systems that affect every aspect of our lives, from the banking system to the health service. “ITsafe will take our technical expertise and use it to help home users understand the risks and keep their computer systems, mobile phones and a range of related consumer electronic items, safe.”

Sir David Omand, Security & Intelligence Coordinator in the Cabinet Office, said: "The UK is an information society. Three quarters of public services are now online, e-commerce is thriving and around 13 million homes now have internet access. This brings significant social and economic benefits to thenation but, as with everything in life, there are also some associated risks which must be addressed.”

“It is essential that all IT users take precautions to protect themselves when they are online. ITsafe will alert home computer users about

significant threats to their systems and give them advice and information to help them to go online safely and with confidence".

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