

Guidance on wireless local area network security is close at hand

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The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has released in final form a guide to enhanced security for wireless local area networks (WLAN). A WLAN is a group of wireless networking devices within a limited geographic area, such as an office building, that exchange data through radio communications.

Guidelines for Securing Wireless [Local Area](#) Networks (NIST Special Publication 800-153) recommends that valuable information be protected by integrating security into every step of the system development process—from initiation to maintenance to disposal.

Employees can use mobile devices, including laptops and smart phones, connected to the WLAN to perform tasks that could be done on desktops, but with the freedom to work anywhere in the covered area. While WLANs can improve productivity, they can add an additional security challenge. WLANs often have weaker configurations and authentication processes that make them vulnerable for attackers to penetrate and gain access to sensitive information.

The WLAN's security depends upon how well all of its components, including client devices and wireless switches, are secured. The new guide provides recommendations to improve security on such topics as standardizing WLAN security configurations, including configuration design, implementation, evaluation and maintenance; and provides guidelines concerning the selection of monitoring tools and the frequency of security monitoring.

The publication supplements other NIST publications on WLAN security and points readers to other NIST publications on system planning, development and [security](#) activities.

The recommendations included in SP 800-153 are applicable to the protection of unclassified wireless networks and of unclassified facilities that are within range of unclassified [wireless](#) networks.

More information: SP800-153 is available at www.nist.gov/manuscript-public...ch.cfm?pub_id=910174 . For a guide to additional NIST publications on computer security, including wireless security, see the Computer Security Resource Center list at csrc.nist.gov/publications/index.html .

Provided by National Institute of Standards and Technology

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