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E-Briefs

A Biweekly Security Communiqué

Volume 6, Issue 19 September 30, 2008

NEWS BRIEFS

Airport Screeners Bypassing Security

The Transportation Security Administration introduced a new screening policy on Sep. 11 that allows screeners to bypass security when arriving for work. According to Carrie Harmon, TSA public affairs manager, the administration is putting resources where there is greater security risk. TSA employees still submit to background checks before hiring, and must report other arrests, including ones that are alcohol-related, within 24 hours. They are also subject to search at any time during employment. According to aviation consultant Mike Boyd, background checks and random screens are not enough. At Denver International Airport this year, a screener was caught bringing a gun through the checkpoint, and two in Atlanta were arrested for smuggling drugs and cash onto airplanes. Under the new policy, these crimes would not have been detected.

Concealed Weapon Laws Make Security Practitioners Worried

Security experts are concerned that over 30 states have passed laws that allow people to carry concealed weapons, according to a report released by the ASIS International Foundation. Five states have even specifically made it illegal for employers and property owners to ban people from bringing concealed weapons onto their property, including parking lots. Security experts worry that these laws will result in an increase of co-worker violence. Studies show that allowing guns to be carried in the workplace increases the chances that an employee will be killed by gunshot. According to a study of North Carolina workplaces, businesses that allowed guns were 6.8 times more likely to have a worker killed than workplaces that banned all weapons. Experts advise security professionals to reduce the likelihood of violence by implementing weapons bans if legal in their state, performing threat assessments and developing employee violence prevention policies.

Enterprises Struggle to Identify Sources of Risk

Although enterprises are more concerned than ever about security, they still disagree about how to measure risks, finds a new study by service provider BT. In the group's yearly security study, which examines corporate security priorities and preemptive risk management, 83 percent of enterprises ranked "improving security" as one of their top priorities for the next year. Twenty-two percent said this is their most urgent task. Yet pinpointing the source of the risk, and making a case to executives for more investment in security technology, are evasive goals for many companies, find BT researchers. Three out of ten respondents implicated poorly trained end users as the main threat to network security. Despite these concerns, many organizations are not following through with regular security audits. Fewer than half of the companies--about 48 percent--examine their security platforms on a quarterly basis, according to the report. Security professionals must quantify the possible cost of attack-related downtime in order to make a strong business case, experts say. "These costs should take into account financial damages (outright theft), recovery costs (notification of affected parties, etc.), and loss of reputation (leading to loss of business)," the report adds.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Airports in Talks to Lift Security Ban on Liquids

The British government is considering lifting the nationwide ban on liquids in carry-on luggage. The government began restricting the amount of liquid that airline passengers can carry after intelligence experts discovered an alleged plot to blow up airliners with bombs transported in soft drink bottles. However, Virgin Atlantic airlines called for a policy change after none of the eight men allegedly involved in the plot were found guilty of trying to blow up an airplane. The aviation industry wants to see the restrictions changed because it has spent a significant amount of money to enforce the new rules. BAA, which operates several of the country's largest airports, hired an additional 3,000 security officers in order to comply with the restrictions. Airlines have also complained that the restrictions make passengers less likely to fly out of U.K. airports. A terminal at Heathrow airport recently began using technology that can automatically recognize the presence of liquids in luggage. Scientists are currently trying to alter the scanners to only identify harmful substances. "The technology is there, which will allow these scanners not only to test for liquids but also to determine if those liquids are dangerous or not," said an anonymous source in the security industry. "At the moment, that technology is being tested by the security services and when they are happy that it works, the ban will be lifted."

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