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Contact:	Phil Bulman	Cecelia Taylor	Debbie Weierman
	301-975-5661	202-401-3059	202-324-3691
	bulman@nist.gov	cecilia.taylor@sba.gov	dweierman@fbi.gov

FBI, SBA AND COMMERCE DEPARTMENT ALLIANCE WILL PROMOTE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECURITY FOR AMERICA'S SMALL BUSINESSES

WASHINGTON — The nation's small businesses will have better access to computer and information technology security resources and be able to assess their information security needs as a result of a joint federal effort to promote security for their information technology systems.

The National Infrastructure Protection Center (NIPC) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), and the Commerce Department's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) have signed a partnership agreement to provide computer and information technology security to help small businesses across the nation safeguard their information systems.

The interagency agreement was signed at the NIPC's Second Annual InfraGard National Congress in Niagara Falls, NY, last week and will serve to promote computer protection and security for America's small businesses and to identify information security vulnerabilities.

The NIPC, the SBA and NIST will cosponsor an upcoming series of computer and information security workshops. The workshops are scheduled for July 11 in Washington, D.C., at the SBA's headquarters, August 2 in San Francisco at the SBA's San Francisco District Office, and September 26 in Chicago at the Center for Information Technology and Privacy Law at the John Marshall Law School.

The protection of information is one of the most valuable assets of an organization, and is critical to the operation of a small business. An increasing number of businesses rely on information technology for storing, processing and communicating information. Information security provides a sound foundation for business success by safeguarding financial and customer records, and business strategies. It serves to protect against threats and vulnerabilities and to ensure business continuity.

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Ninety-nine percent of all U.S. businesses are small businesses of 500 employees or less. Small business is where many of the innovations take place. Swifter, more flexible and often more daring than big business, small firms produce many of the items that fuel the nation's economy. A vulnerability common to a large percentage of them could pose a threat to the national economy.

Emphasis will be placed on training small business owners to identify the needed, cost-effective security products, processes, and services making them more educated consumers. The workshops will show business owners what tools and techniques are needed for good information security and the technology used to safeguard critical information.

For more information on the computer security workshop, visit online at <http://csrc.nist.gov/securebiz/>.

The U.S. Small Business Administration provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. For more information about all of the SBA's programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800 U ASK SBA or TDD 704-344-6640, or visit the SBA's extensive Web site at <http://www.sba.gov>.

The NIPC, www.nipc.gov, serves as the focal point for threat assessment, warning, investigation, and response for threats or attacks against critical government infrastructures. Additional information on the NIPC's Second Annual InfraGard Congress can be found online at <http://www.infragard.net/>.

NIST, www.nist.gov, promotes the economic growth of the United States by working with industry to develop and apply technology, measurement and standards.

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