

WARPs & Information Sharing

As part of NISCC's role in co-ordinating the protection of the UK's Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) services against electronic attack, NISCC encourages **Information Sharing**. In order to stimulate better promulgation of Alerts and Warnings, to improve Awareness and Education, and to encourage Incident Reporting, NISCC promotes various types of Information Sharing models.

These Information Sharing models include:

- the well-established CERT (or CSIRT), which is geared towards technical response to network attacks;
- the Information Exchange, which is aimed at select groups of CNI system providers;
- the WARP model which is aimed at small communities of users and system owners both inside and well beyond the CNI.

NISCC's Information Sharing Strategy - CERTs and WARPs

CERTs (Computer Emergency Response Teams) aka CSIRTs, (Computer Security Incident Response Teams) play an invaluable role in protecting their communities and others against Electronic Attack.

NISCC encourages the formation, development and co-operation of CERTs by supporting existing associations (TF-CSIRT, FIRST) and by helping to develop new ones (UK CERTs Forum, European Government CERTs group). NISCC also shares information with CERTs through Uniras, the UK Government CERT, which is part of NISCC.

NISCC recognises however that CERTs can require extensive financial and technical staffing resources, and such costs are not viable for many communities who nonetheless could benefit from CERT-type services and support.

NISCC has consequently developed a new model, similar to a CERT, but realisable at a fraction of the cost. This alternative concept, which is better suited to the needs of small communities, including SMEs and citizens, is the **Warning, Advice and Reporting Point (WARP)**.

The benefits of a WARP include: early warning of new electronic attack threats and vulnerabilities, trusted sharing of incident information, increased exchange of best practice, collaboration on dealing with problems, increased user awareness and education, and greater confidence in using Internet-based services, to name but a few. All of these things will not only help the individuals directly involved, but increasing their protection will reduce the threat to everyone else, including the CNI.



Functions of a WARP

WARPs perform some of the tasks of CERTs but are not expected to provide the technical response service of most CERTs. A WARP provides to its community a service of early warnings of alerts and vulnerabilities, specifically tailored for its community; this can avoid the duplication of each member sorting through dozens of sources, or even worse, not having time to monitor developing threats. The WARP also provides a limited help-desk service for the community, geared to the specialised needs and building on the knowledge of the community membership. It also provides a trusted focus for incidents and attacks to be reported, to help find assistance or co-operation in dealing with the problem. Such reports will be valuable to members, but when sanitised and anonymised, sharing them with other communities can be equally valuable, and will encourage reciprocal Information Sharing.



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Information Sharing in Action

Running a WARP

WARPs can be set up by a few able and enthusiastic individuals, to serve their community. This may be a group of small businesses, a particular industry association, a large corporate, a central government department or a local community.

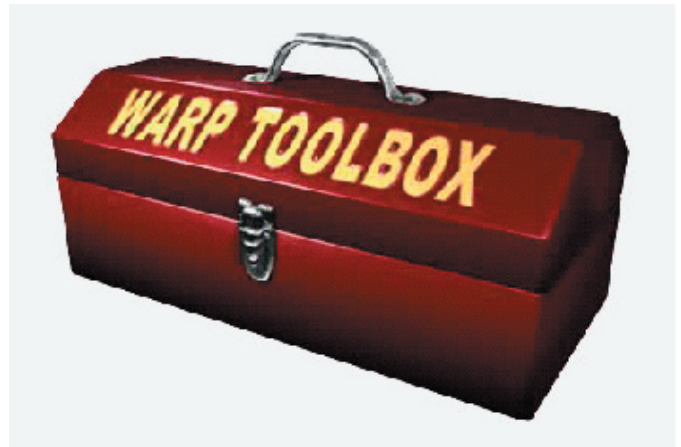
A WARP can even be run by a single individual in their spare time, as is already the case for one online forum brought together by their interest in a particular subject.

Other WARPs minimise their running costs by using virtual teams on a job-sharing basis to man the WARP operation. This can be resourced from the time-savings generated by the WARP amongst its members, who no longer need spend several hours each day scanning and following up sources of warnings and advisories.

Other WARPs will be funded by public-private partnerships, for the common good, or to reduce the risk to each other from members who are part of a supply chain. The applicability of the model is limited only by the ability to identify suitable communities in need of such services.

The implementation of the concept relies on identifying an organisation or individual who can see the need and the benefits of a WARP, and is prepared to work (with NISCC assistance) to establish one.

If you are interested in forming a WARP, CERT or other Information Sharing group, NISCC would like to help.
Contact: sharing@nisc.gov.uk



The online WARP Toolbox provides useful advice on how to set up and run a WARP, from help in producing a business case, to advice on marketing, governance and operation. Full detailed information can be found at www.warp.gov.uk

Working together

One of the greatest strengths of WARPs and CERTs comes from their willingness to co-operate with each other, to share experience, expertise and information. NISCC encourages and supports this process. All WARPs agree to abide by a Code of Practice that reinforces the co-operative nature of the WARP concept, and will ensure the development of an extensive support network.

NISCC offers support to any Information Sharing groups, or models, in order to encourage the sharing of warnings, advice, and (appropriately sanitised) incident reports, with WARPs, CERTs and with NISCC, for the benefit of all.

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