

Cybersecurity Guidance From Investment Industry Organization

January 12, 2016

Cyber risk management is an increasingly important challenge for organizations of all kinds. The Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada (IIROC), the national self-regulatory organization that oversees investment dealers and their trading activity in Canadian markets, has published detailed guidance to help investment dealer firms manage cybersecurity risks. The guidance provides useful checklists and helpful summaries of industry standards and best practices. The guidance emphasizes the need for organizations to proactively manage cyber risks and to prepare for cybersecurity incidents.

Cyber Risks

Cyber risks are the risks of harm, loss and liability (e.g. business disruption, trade secret disclosure, financial loss, loss to stakeholder value, reputational harm, legal noncompliance liability and civil liability to customers, business partners and other persons) to an organization resulting from a failure or breach of the organization's information technology systems. Cyber risks can result from internal sources (e.g. employees, contractors, service providers and suppliers) or external sources (e.g. nation states, terrorists, hacktivists, competitors and acts of nature).

Cyber risks appear to be increasing in frequency, intensity and harmful consequences as a result of various circumstances, including increasing sophistication and complexity of cyber-attacks, increasing use of information technology and data, increasing regulation and increasing legal liability. Commentators have said that there are only two kinds of organizations – those that have been hacked and know it, and those that have been hacked and don't know it yet.

Cybersecurity Best Practices Guide

IIROC's Cybersecurity Best Practices Guide sets out a voluntary, risk-based cybersecurity framework, comprised of industry standards and best practices, to manage cyber risks. The Guide's stated purpose is to provide an understanding of standards-based security controls that make up a best practices cybersecurity program. The Guide emphasizes that cybersecurity is a multi-faceted challenge that requires an

enterprise-wide, interdisciplinary approach to implement a comprehensive strategy to avoid, mitigate, accept or transfer cyber risks.

The Guide discusses best practices relating to governance and risk management, insider risk, physical and environmental security, awareness and training, threat assessment, network security, information system protection, user management and access controls, asset management, incident response, information sharing and breach reporting, cyber insurance, vendor risk management and cybersecurity policies. The Guide includes a Cybersecurity Incident Checklist and a Sample Vendor Assessment form.

The Guide identifies the following key points:

- **Governance** : A sound governance framework – strong leadership, board and senior management engagement and a clear accountability – are essential for a successful cybersecurity program.
- **Training** : Effective training of personnel can significantly reduce the likelihood of successful cyber-attacks.
- **Technical Controls** : A cyber risk management program should include technical controls appropriate for the organization's particular circumstances.
- **Service Providers** : An organization should exercise strong due diligence and implement clear performance and verification policies to manage cyber risks that arise from relationships with service providers who have access to the organization's sensitive firm or client information or information technology systems.

Cyber Incident Management Planning Guide

IIROC's Cyber Incident Management Planning Guide is designed to assist in the preparation of cyber-incident response plans. The Guide emphasizes that an organization must be able to respond to cybersecurity incidents in a consistent, coordinated and timely manner. The Guide explains the five phases of cybersecurity incident management: plan and prepare, detect and report, assess and decide, respond and post-incident activity. The Guide includes recommendations (based on the National Institute of Standards and Technology Computer Security Incident Handling Guide) for implementing a cybersecurity incident response plan. The Guide also includes a simple, ten-step guide for how an organization should respond to a cybersecurity incident when the organization is not prepared.

Comment

IIROC's cyber risk management guidance is described as "voluntary", and "not intended to create new legal or regulatory obligations". Nevertheless, guidance issued by IIROC and other financial industry organizations and regulators (e.g. SEC, FINRA, CSA and OSFI) will likely be considered by courts and regulators when determining the reasonable standard of care required of an investment dealer firm that is the victim of a cybersecurity incident. IIROC's guidance, while directed to investment dealer firms, can be helpful for organizations of all kinds.

BLG | Canada's Law Firm

As the largest, truly full-service Canadian law firm, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG) delivers practical legal advice for domestic and international clients across more practices and industries than any Canadian firm. With over 800 lawyers, intellectual property agents and other professionals, BLG serves the legal needs of businesses and institutions across Canada and beyond – from M&A and capital markets, to disputes, financing, and trademark & patent registration.

blg.com

BLG Offices

Calgary

Centennial Place, East Tower
520 3rd Avenue S.W.
Calgary, AB, Canada
T2P 0R3

T 403.232.9500
F 403.266.1395

Ottawa

World Exchange Plaza
100 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON, Canada
K1P 1J9

T 613.237.5160
F 613.230.8842

Vancouver

1200 Waterfront Centre
200 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC, Canada
V7X 1T2

T 604.687.5744
F 604.687.1415

Montréal

1000 De La Gauchetière Street West
Suite 900
Montréal, QC, Canada
H3B 5H4

T 514.954.2555
F 514.879.9015

Toronto

Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower
22 Adelaide Street West
Toronto, ON, Canada
M5H 4E3

T 416.367.6000
F 416.367.6749

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to constitute legal advice, a complete statement of the law, or an opinion on any subject. No one should act upon it or refrain from acting without a thorough examination of the law after the facts of a specific situation are considered. You are urged to consult your legal adviser in cases of specific questions or concerns. BLG does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy, currency or completeness of this publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior written permission of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. If this publication was sent to you by BLG and you do not wish to receive further publications from BLG, you may ask to remove your contact information from our mailing lists by emailing unsubscribe@blg.com or manage your subscription preferences at blg.com/MyPreferences. If you feel you have received this message in error please contact communications@blg.com. BLG's privacy policy for publications may be found at blg.com/en/privacy.

© 2026 Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. Borden Ladner Gervais LLP is an Ontario Limited Liability Partnership.