

**RESPECTING PRIVACY
SAFEGUARDING DATA
ENABLING TRUST**

January 28

**DATA
PRIVACY
DAY**

Why Secure Your Browser

Today, web browsers such as Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, and Apple Safari are installed on almost all computers. Because web browsers are used so frequently, it is vital to configure them securely. Often, the web browser that comes with an operating system is not set up in a secure default configuration. Not securing your web browser can lead quickly to a variety of computer problems caused by anything from spyware being installed without your knowledge to intruders taking control of your computer.

There is an increasing threat from software attacks that take advantage of vulnerable web browsers. We have observed new software vulnerabilities being exploited and directed at web browsers through use of compromised or malicious websites.

This problem is made worse by a number of factors, including the following:

- Many users have a tendency to click on links without considering the risks of their actions.
- Web page addresses can be disguised or take you to an unexpected site.
- Many web browsers are configured to provide increased functionality at the cost of decreased security.
- New security vulnerabilities are often discovered after the software is configured and packaged by the manufacturer.
- Computer systems and software packages may be bundled with additional software, which increases the number of vulnerabilities that may be attacked.
- Third-party software may not have a mechanism for receiving security updates.
- Many websites require that users enable certain features or install more software, putting the computer at additional risk.
- Many users do not know how to configure their web browsers securely.
- Many users are unwilling to enable or disable functionality as required to secure their web browser.

As a result, exploiting vulnerabilities in web browsers has become a popular way for attackers to compromise computer systems.

<https://www.us-cert.gov/ncas/tips/ST05-008>