

Account Information Security

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What is Account Information Security?

Visa's Account Information Security (AIS) Programme is a risk management programme sponsored by Visa and run by Visa's members. By complying with AIS requirements, Visa members, merchants, and service providers protect their customers, meet their obligations to the Visa payment system and build a culture of security that benefits everyone.

Who does the AIS program apply to?

The AIS is a requirement for all entities participating in the Visa payment system, including merchants, processors and internet payment service providers who process, store or transmit Visa cardholder account or transaction information.

Why was the AIS program developed?

The AIS program is designed to protect sensitive account and transaction information in the Visa acceptance environment. It protects the interests of all payment participants, including members, merchants and cardholders - in both the physical and virtual worlds.

What are the benefits of the AIS program?

By implementing and adhering to the Payment Card Industry (PCI) data security requirements, merchants are taking an important step towards better protecting customers' information from potential hacking and fraud.

As well as protecting customers, appropriate data security limits risk exposure and minimizes the losses and operational expense that stem from compromised cardholder account information.

The AIS program can help by:

- Promoting a brand's integrity and boosting consumer confidence in a business
- Increasing sales and business due to increased consumer confidence
- Protecting against potential loss of revenue and unwanted investigative and legal costs
- Providing greater awareness of security measures and preventative options available
- Reducing cardholder disputes and associated costs resulting from fraudulent transactions generated by compromised data (upon global take-up of the AIS programme).

What does the AIS program involve?

To establish common industry standards, Visa and MasterCard produced the Payment Card Industry (PCI) Data Security Standard – a common set of industry requirements to ensure the safe handling of cardholder information.

AIS is based on two fundamental principles:

- Do not store cardholder data
- If you need to store some data, encrypt it.

Depending on their average monthly processing volume, an entity must perform the following tasks to validate compliance with the minimum-security standards of the AIS programme:

- Annual testing through a self-assessment questionnaire
- Quarterly vulnerability scanning of Internet-connected systems
- Independent third party onsite review.

How does a business get started?

The AIS program is a requirement if you participate in the Visa payment system. Your acquiring bank will be responsible for ensuring that you meet Visa's PCI standards, and will guide merchants through the AIS validation process.

What is the cost?

In September 2005, Visa announced it would offer all parties that handle Visa cardholder data access to a free security assessment service and quarterly network vulnerability scans to validate the security of their Internet-connected systems. Visa has partnered with ScanAlert, one of the world's largest website security certification companies, to provide the services to Visa member financial institutions, Internet Payment Service Providers (IPSPs) and merchants. The free service is a world first and is provided through the website www.scanalert.com.

What should be done if I experience a security breach?

The risk of theft or data compromise continues to increase. It is necessary to have an incident response plan in place that is tailored to a particular business environment, in order to minimize disruption or losses to business operations in the event of an incident.

The 'Incident Response Procedure for Account Compromise' is a useful guide containing: information on the steps needed to develop and implement effective security response procedures; how to define and quantify a security breach; the actions to take; and whom to contact. You can download a copy from the Visa website.

More information

Resources and downloads are provided online at <http://www.visa.co.nz/secured> or www.visa-asia.com/secured.

Visa New Zealand

In New Zealand, Visa is the leading payment brand with almost 2 million cards on issue and more than 100,000 merchant acceptance locations. NZ\$14 billion was spent at point of sale or withdrawn from ATMs in New Zealand using Visa cards in the year ended June 2005. Visa processes more than 100 million transactions in New Zealand annually. For more information, visit www.visa.co.nz.