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IT Security Issues - SCAT data in a federal agency

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Times are a changing

The IT security landscape has been changing. Federal agencies are facing heightened pressure to rigorously protect data.

- Any data that passes through our hands
- From cradle to grave
- From theft, but also from intentional corruption

Federal agencies need to “certify” that data hasn’t been tampered with (data lifecycle documented and approved by an Information System Security Officer).

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Why does SCAT care?

NOAA's SCAT database

Now: on a single machine in the command post, 1 user

Future: on a server in the command post or on the web, many users

Government data can't pass through or reside on a non-gov server

- Can't use non-certified cloud services
- Data can't pass through data collection servers
- Where do you securely archive SCAT data once a response is done?


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Some specifics

- Non-gov servers must be FedRAMP certified: involves Assessment and Authorization (A&A) process
- Applications built on approved technology stacks (unix-CentOS, PostgreSQL, open source JavaScript libraries) get approved easier
- Accessibility requirements (section 508 compliance)
- Password standards (30 day expiration, no group accounts)
- Annual security scans
- Extensive documentation to validate IT Security standards have been met


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Bottom line

Building SCAT software that's usable by government agencies now take a lot more work than in the "old days".


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