Learning Minute: Email Association

Based on true stories from real life at SNL
What Happened

Gerald received a long email string that had several recipients discussing a recent series of research reports from universities. His colleagues were discussing the unclassified information found in these reports that would have implications regarding their projects.

Gerald noticed that the facts pulled from those open source reports included in the email, while different, were put together in such a way that the email was possibly classified by association.

Gerald contacted his Derivative Classifier, and after a review, Gerald calls Sandia’s Security Incident Management Program (SIMP).
Think

- Who has a need to know (NTK) to receive this information?
  - Who is included on distribution?
  - Could the information in the rest of the email be combined with the information you are inserting cause the entire string to be classified?
  - Should the discussion be moved to a classified network?
  - Should I engage my Derivative Classifier for a review?

These questions should be considered for all electronic messages.
Assess

- Can this information be relayed in person rather than email?
- Are the email recipients aware of possible classification by compilation, or classification by association, issues?
- Who has the potential to see this email?
- Will the email leave Sandia’s firewall?
Protect

To ensure that sensitive email does not go outside the firewall or to anyone without a need to know, follow these steps:

- Remember to review the entire email string to ensure that no possible compilations or associations of sensitive information are present.
- If in doubt, start a new email.
- Better yet, move the email conversation to a classified network.
Final Thoughts

Be mindful of information sent through email. The information in this Learning Minute is related to *Classification by Association*. Are you aware of the other type, *Classification by Compilation*?

*Classification by Association* concerns 1) two or more **different** unclassified facts that when combined in a specific way result in a classified statement, or 2) two or more **different** classified facts (or unclassified and classified facts) that when combined in a specific way result in a higher classification level or more restrictive category (*e.g.*, two Confidential statements together may create Secret, or an unclassified fact with an NSI fact may create FRD).

*Classification by Compilation* occurs when 1) a large number of **similar**, unclassified pieces of information are put into a document in such a way (through selection, arrangement or completeness) as to become classified, or 2) a large number of **similar** classified pieces of information (or unclassified and classified information) adds enough value to become classified at a higher level (*e.g.*, a series of test results separately are Confidential, but combined together in one document in such an arrangement as to form a complete picture of a weapon characteristic could be classified as Secret).

**Think. Assess. Protect.**
Questions? Ideas

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Contact the Communications Team at cdocs@sandia.gov with ideas and suggestions for future topics.