

STAY SMART ONLINE ALERT SERVICE

User Guide

The purpose of this User Guide is to provide information about the Stay Smart Online Alert Service and assist users with the registration process. All information contained in this guide is also available from the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section on the Stay Smart Online Alert Service web site: www.ssoalertservice.net.au

1. About the Stay Smart Online Alert Service

The Stay Smart Online (SSO) Alert Service is a free subscription based service that provides home internet users and small to medium enterprises (SMEs) with information on the latest computer network threats and vulnerabilities in simple, non-technical, easy to understand language. It will also provide solutions to help manage these risks.

The Stay Smart Online Alert Service is also available through the Stay Smart Online web site: www.staysmartonline.gov.au

The Stay Smart Online Alert Service is an initiative of the Australian government and is sponsored by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and provided by AusCERT (www.auscert.org.au).

2. Who is the Stay Smart Online Alert Service most suited to?

The Stay Smart Online (SSO) Alert Service is free to the public. It is aimed primarily at Australian based home internet users and Australian small to medium sized enterprises.

In particular, within these target groups, the SSO Alert Service is most suited for home internet users and organisations with:

- Low awareness of e-security
- The lowest level of technical understanding
- Without e-security experts readily available to assist them

Small to medium sized enterprises with medium to large networks and with dedicated IT staff, may find this service does not fully meet their needs.

3. What type of information will I receive if I subscribe to the Stay Smart Online Alert Service?

The Stay Smart Online Alert Service includes four specific types of reports:

- Alerts
- Advisories
- Newsletters
- Fact Sheets

Each of these report formats have a different purpose and significance. By understanding the purpose of each report format, you can best ensure that you receive the type of information in the most timely manner for your requirements.

Alerts

A Stay Smart Online Alert will provide information about computer threats or software or hardware bugs which poses a HIGH risk to the internet users and/or their computer's files and/or the security of their computer system itself.

If the Alert contains information about a software or hardware bug, it will generally recommend a course of action be taken in a time critical manner in order to help users protect their information, files and computer from attack.

If the Alert contains information about an internet based threat, it will generally provide a warning information about an attack that is currently underway targeting Australian internet users in order to help users recognise elements of the attack and what they need to do to avoid being affected by the attack.

Because all information contained in Alerts are HIGH risk, they are important and if applicable to your situation SHOULD be taken seriously.

Advisories

Stay Smart Online Advisories provide information about computer software or hardware bugs which pose a MEDIUM RISK to internet users' computer files and/or the security of their computer systems.

Advisories will generally recommend a course of action be taken in a time critical manner in order to help users protect their information, files and computer from attack.

Because all information contained in Advisories are MEDIUM RISK, they are important and if applicable to your situation SHOULD be taken seriously. However, the requirement for action is not as time critical as for Alerts, which generally should be acted on more quickly.

Newsletters

Stay Smart Online Newsletters are produced monthly and may include:

- general information about the Stay Smart Online Alert Service
- information about trends in internet based attacks
- quick tips or reminders about how to improve your online security
- general information about LOW risk threats

Newsletters are not time critical and are aimed at raising awareness about security issues in general rather than addressing a specific software bug or threat.

Factsheets

Stay Smart Online Fact Sheets include specific details and instructions about how to take a recommended course of action aimed at helping subscribers to configure their computers securely, or help them to recover from certain types of attacks on their computers.

Sometimes Stay Smart Online Alerts or Advisories will refer to a specific Fact Sheet to provide additional details about how to prevent or reduce the potential harm an attack could cause.

All Stay Smart Online Alert Service reports are written in plain English so they may be understood by as many people as possible, including those with low levels of technical knowledge or experience.

4. What message formats are available as part of the subscription?

You can subscribe to the Alerts, Advisories and Newsletters either by email and/or RSS feeds. If you do not wish to subscribe to the Stay Smart Online Alert Service, you may still read all copies of the Alerts, Advisories, Newsletters and Factsheets from the web site. Factsheets are available only directly from the Stay Smart Online Alert Service web site.

5. How do I register for the Stay Smart Online Alerts Service?

Simply click on the "Subscribe" link on the home page (www.ssoalertservice.net.au) and follow the instructions provided.


6. How do I register for RSS feeds?

There are two ways to subscribe to RSS feeds. You can either:

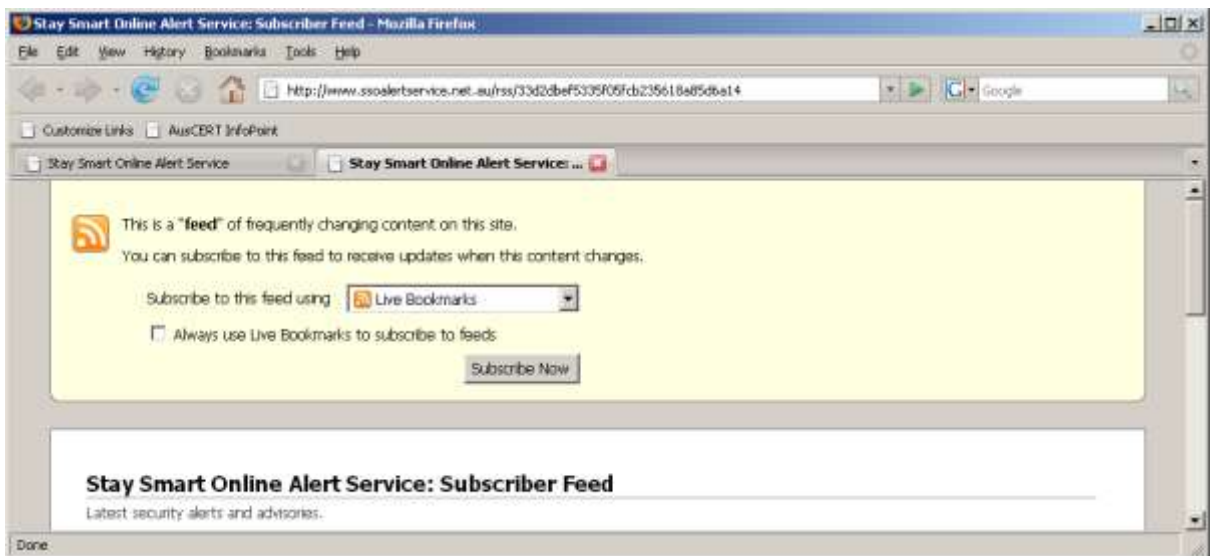
- i. subscribe to the service and set up a profile which specifies a subset of the Alerts, Advisories and/or Newsletters you would like to receive; and/or

- ii. subscribe to the complete set of RSS feeds separately for Alerts and/or Advisories and/or Newsletters.

To do the former as per (i) above you need to first subscribe to the SSO Alert Service. After you have registered, login and configure your SSO Alert Service profile to select the type of reports you would like to receive and how you wish to receive them, ie via email and/or RSS.

- a) From the "My SSO Alerts Profile" tab, make sure you have ticked the "I wish to receive notifications via RSS" check box.
- b) At the bottom of this page, click on the "Click on the RSS Icon to access your RSS feed" adjacent to the RSS icon . This will open a new browser window and provide a list of the feeds you are subscribed to, according to your profile selections.
- c) When you first open this list via the browser you will be asked if you want to automatically update to this RSS feed.

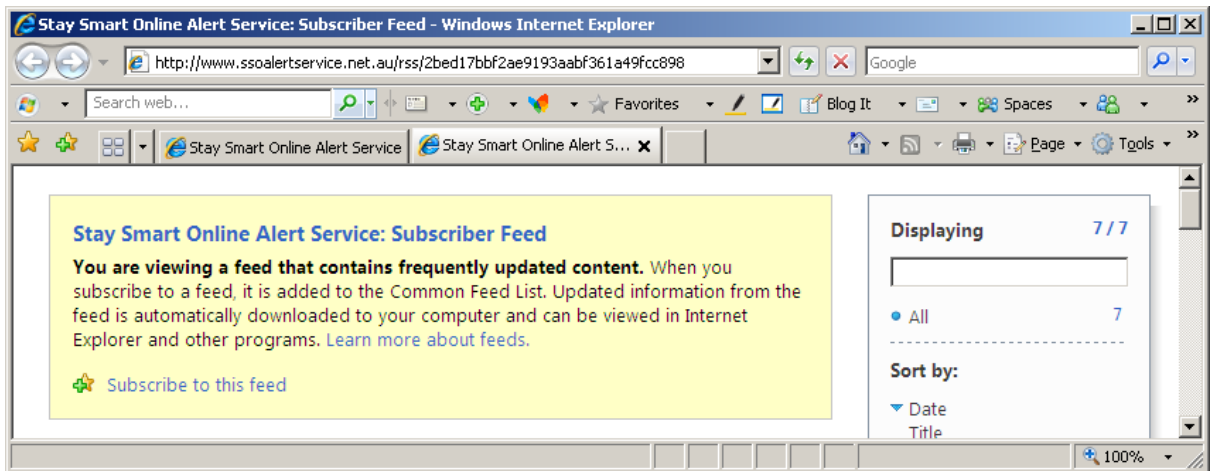
If using Mozilla Firefox, you will be given the option of selecting which RSS feed reader you wish to use.



Click on the down arrow of the "Subscribe to this feed using ..." and select your preferred RSS feed reader, then click "Subscribe Now" button.

To view the feeds you will need to open the RSS feed reader you selected in the previous step.

If using Microsoft Internet Explorer, the browser window will include the following instruction box:



Click on the "Subscribe to this feed" link:

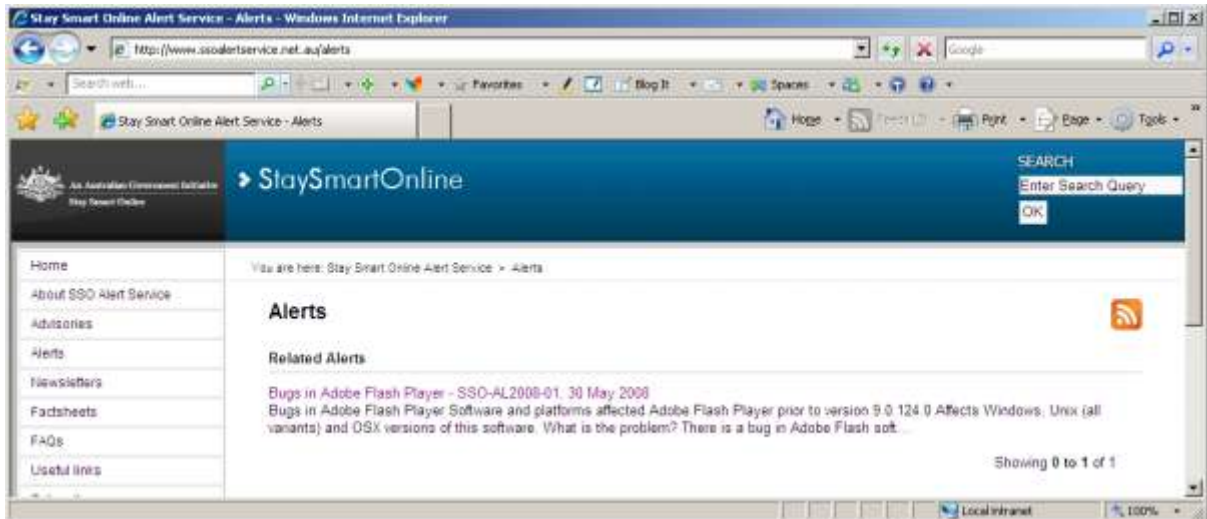


You have the option of just clicking "Subscribe" or creating a new folder to store the SSO Alert Service RSS feeds in.

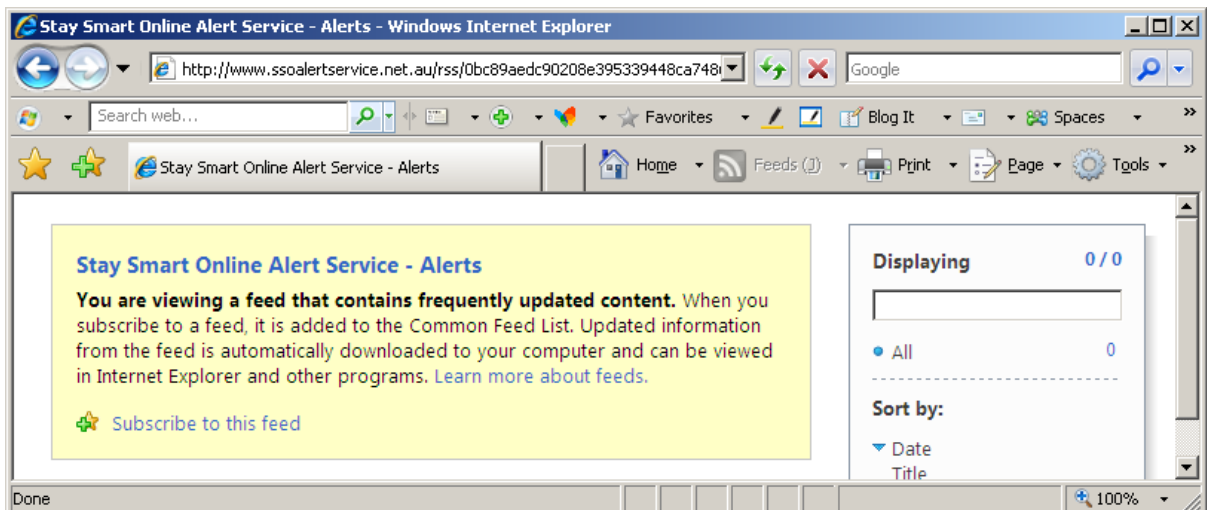
The feeds can then be viewed from Microsoft Internet Explorer by clicking on the favourites star icon and selecting "Feeds".

Alternatively, to subscribe to the complete list of Alerts, Advisories and/or Newsletters without the need to register or subscribe to the SSO Alert Service as per (ii) above, then follow these steps.

To subscribe to all RSS feeds for all SSO Alerts, click on the link to Alerts in the side navigation bar:



Click on the RSS feed button on the right hand side, which presents a window as follows:



Then click on the "Subscribe to feed" link.

To subscribe to RSS feeds for all SSO Advisories and Newsletters, click on the link to Advisories and repeat the steps above. Click on the link to Newsletters and repeat the steps above.

7. What is the purpose of the unique memorable phrase?

When you subscribe to the Stay Smart Online Service by email and/or RSS feeds, you are asked to create your own unique memorable phrase. The memorable phrase is not secret information in the way that a password is. The memorable phrase will be included within the content of all Stay Smart Online Alert Service email communications sent to you, including the SSO Alerts and SSO Advisories.

This is an easy way for SSO subscribers to check that the SSO email communications, including the SSO Alerts and/or Advisories are genuine, ie that they were sent by the Stay Smart Online Alert Service.

It is a mechanism that helps prevent subscribers from being tricked by attackers who might send out millions of spam emails to Australian email addresses pretending to be from the Stay Smart Online Alert Service. If an attacker tries to do this, it is extremely unlikely the attacker will know the unique memorable phrase that belongs to each of the SSO subscribers and hence a fake SSO Alert or Advisory can be more easily detected and ignored.

Therefore, if you receive a SSO Alert or Advisory, it is important to check that it includes your unique memorable phrase. If it does, then this is a sign that it was probably sent via the SSO portal and that you can trust and rely on its contents. It does not provide a guarantee that an attacker has not modified the content prior to, or after it is received on your computer but it is very unlikely an attacker would attempt to modify an existing SSO alert or advisory that includes your unique memorable phrase.

8. Why didn't I receive my confirmation email after registering on the web site?

If you have successfully completed the registration form for the Stay Smart Online Alert Service but did not receive the confirmation email which you need to respond to in order to finalise the registration and subscription process, this is most likely due to a spam filtering problem. Either

- the email may have been moved to a "junk" email folder or similar folder if you have spam filtering turned on by your email software or spam filtering software; or
- the email may have been blocked by your ISP, if your ISP performs spam filtering.

Check if this occurred. If the email is found in your junk email folder, move it to the inbox and then respond. Alternatively, check with your ISP if the email was received by them and if so, ask that it be released.

To help locate the confirmation email, search on the "from" field or "subject" field:

- the from field reads: Stay Smart Online Alert Service
<noreply@ssoalertservice.net.au>
- the subject field reads: Smart Online Alert Service: Subscribe Request

9. Why don't the RSS feeds include my memorable phrase?

RSS feeds are automatically drawn from content on this web site. Therefore, it is not necessary to include the unique memorable phrase to check the authenticity of the feed. This can be achieved by comparing the content of the RSS feed with the content of the alerts and advisories on the Stay Smart Online Alert Service web site.

10. What do I do if I have forgotten my username and/or password?

If you have forgotten your password that you use in order to login to the Stay Smart Online Alert Service web site, then click on the link to “

[Forgot password?](#)” from the home page: www.ssoalertservice.net.au

Follow the prompts and steps required. It is a good idea to write down and hide your username and password so that you don't forget them again.

If you have forgotten your username that you use in order to login to the Stay Smart Online Alert Service web site, then click on the link to “

[Forgot username?](#)” from the home page: www.ssoalertservice.net.au

Follow the prompts and steps required. It is a good idea to write down and hide your username and password so that you don't forget them again.

11. How do I change my subscription preferences or unsubscribe from the SSO Alert Service?

To modify the type of reports you receive or the subject areas, click on the “Login” link on the SSO web site home page www.ssoalertservice.net.au, and follow the instructions for modifying your profile options.

Similarly, if you wish to unsubscribe from the service, click on the “Login” link on the SSO web site home page www.ssoalertservice.net.au, and follow the instructions for unsubscribing.

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