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A security breach notification law could be a step in the right direction, according to a public policy expert.

By Asavin Wattanajantra, 18 Sep 2009 at 14:39



Holding software companies, **ISPs** and financial institutions liable for public and private sector **data breaches** could help prevent them, according to an internet public policy expert.

Speaking at **ENISA's annual security conference** in Greece, Ian Brown, a senior research fellow at the Oxford Internet Institute, said that holding them liable could help prevent data breaches better than direct spending on government intervention.

But Brown admitted such a rule would be politically difficult to enforce. Last year, the immediate response by the UK government to a House of Lords report recommending a new data-breach law on liability was a firm 'no'.

Brown said: "They didn't give a reason why. I imagine part of the reason - and I'm not being super-cynical here - was that behind the scenes there were software companies, ISPs and banks that are influential within government."

He said that security breach notification laws were a step in the right direction, at least forcing firms to be transparent when things went wrong.

"I think there are some government MPs who would still like to move in that direction, and I think that would be a positive thing," he added.

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Too late...

This sort of move is about 30 years too late. Software today is too complex. It impossible to test it completely. All you can hope for is best effort and that the developers and admins respond in a timely manner, when a breach is discovered. It would be nice and it sounds easy when you look at it at a political level. Look deeper and who do you blame? The user? The admin who runs the site? The company that installed the computer? The software developer? The person who configured the software? The person who configured the OS? The person who installed a 3rd party app? The os manufacturer? There are just too many variables to lay the blame clearly in all cases. In some cases, where an admin fails to secure a network, you have a scapegoat, but when it is a combination of user, application, driver, operating system and infrastructure, who is to blame?

By [big_D](#) on Friday Sep 18

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