Analyst Program

A SANS 2020 Report | ICS Asset Identification: It's More Than Just Security!

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Without a solid understanding of the assets on their ICS networks, it's impossible for IT departments to develop and implement a plan to manage risk. Yet, asset identification was the top concern among 338 ICS security professionals participating in the SANS 2019 State of OT/ICS Cybersecurity Survey.

Historically, asset identification has been associated with time-consuming and costly efforts to maintain accurate lists. For example, more than half of operators spend 20% to 80% of their time physically walking through their plants to find and validate plant information, according to a 2016 Control Global article. As a result, this critical and fundamental step of identifying OT/ICS assets is not always the board's top priority for the CISO.

In this SANS whitepaper, Mark Bristow, SANS ICS Active Defense and Incident Response certified instructor, will provide recommendations and guidance from his experience in the field covering how to:

- Get resources needed to start an asset identification program
- Support operations beyond cybersecurity with asset identification
- Provide ongoing asset identification maintenance with limited human resources
- Get quick wins by leveraging information you already have to bootstrap an asset ID program

This content should ultimately help IT professionals to articulate to senior management and board members that asset identification is not just a security need: it can also enhance return on investment through such benefits as improved maintenance, reduced mean-time-to-repair, and increased availability.

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About the Author

Mark Bristow is a SANS certified instructor and the director for the Hunt and Incident Response Team (HIRT) at the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), where he leverages his expertise in incident response, industrial control systems, network monitoring and defense to support national security interests. Before ICS-CERT was integrated into HIRT, Mark was the chief of ICS-CERT incident response. In Mark's 16-year security career he has also worked for CSRA and Securicon, where he supported a variety of private and public sector clients. Mark has been on the front lines of headline-grabbing incident response efforts such as the attack on the Ukrainian power grid, intrusions into U.S. election infrastructure and Russian attempts to gain access to the U.S. power grid. Mark is a frequent speaker on industrial control systems security issues worldwide.

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