

# Persona<sup>®</sup> 5.0 and the Common Criteria Certification

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In January 2003, Persona 5.0 by Esker earned a Common Criteria EAL3 (Evaluation Assurance Level 3) rating. The Common Criteria international standards define methods for evaluating IT security products and systems. Evaluated by an accredited, independent laboratory, Persona 5.0 achieved Evaluation Assurance Level 3 (EAL3). Persona 5.0 is the first terminal emulation software product to meet this stringent standard.

This article briefly explains the Common Criteria certification, how it relates to Persona 5.0, and what it means to all Esker customers who may or may not need to follow the recently mandated National Information Assurance Acquisition Policy (NSTISSP #11).

This article also talks about HIPAA and HCFA compliance, as Persona provides the security standards necessary for these objectives.

## **NSTISSP #11**

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The National Security Telecommunications and Information Systems Security Committee created a policy, NSTISSP #11, which mandates that government agencies purchase Common Criteria certified products. As of July 2002, the U.S. Department of Defense and other government agencies are required to purchase only certified products per NSTISSP #11.

The Common Criteria certification is the result of a series of international efforts to develop a standard way of evaluating IT security products, resulting in a globally-recognized standard.

Earning Common Criteria certification is a complex and time-consuming process, as products can be in evaluation for years before passing muster. For example, Oracle's flagship database product took two years to earn certification and Microsoft Windows<sup>®</sup> 2000 took nearly three years.

Essentially, the Common Criteria evaluation process is similar to an ISO 9001 audit. In fact, Common Criteria is an ISO/IEC 15408 audit. How it works is an independent, accredited lab verifies a company's development environment and processes, including building, archiving, security, and so on, then gives an assessment of how these processes compare to a pre-determined standard. Persona was evaluated by Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC).

### **How secure is EAL3?**

Persona 5.0 has earned Evaluation Assurance Level 3 (EAL3). In Common Criteria evaluation, a product's security is rated on a scale set up by the evaluators. The higher the number, the more secure the product. EAL3 Assurance means that the security features of Persona 5.0 were rigorously and methodically tested for obvious security problems. As a side note, EAL3 Assurance was the goal set for Persona, and EAL4 is the highest assurance level any product has achieved to date. Persona 5.0 earned EAL3 by using SSL, SSH, DES, and Triple DES encoding to safeguard display and report data transmitted between the client workstation, the Persona web server, and the host computer. Persona manages all communications between the client workstation and the host computer, resulting in a trusted communication channel.

## Common Criteria and Persona 5.0

Persona 5.0 is the only terminal emulation/host access product that has completed Common Criteria certification as required by NSTISSP #11. As such, Persona 5.0 is the only host access software product validated for use in critical government information systems governed by NSTISSP #11.

Whether you buy for a government agency or not, Common Criteria certified products are still good to consider because it's not just about the product. Not only was Persona 5.0 put up to the Common Criteria test, but many of Esker's internal processes were evaluated as well. The development cycle, product lifecycle, builder configuration and processes, archiving, bug tracking, testing, documentation, mastering and post-mastering activities, as well as building security were all part of the evaluation process. All of this ensures that our product does what our marketing material suggests, and it is produced and maintained in a secure, consistent way. Non-certified products simply cannot be measured against a Common Criteria certified product.

## Why Esker was first

The certification process may seem like a lot of extra work, but in fact, Esker had already implemented these processes for all of our products long before undergoing Common Criteria evaluation. All we needed to do was officially conform our processes to the framework of the Common Criteria vocabulary. As a result, Esker boasts the fastest certification evaluation in the history of Common Criteria certification.

## HCFA and HIPAA compliance

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In addition to Common Criteria certification, Persona 5.0 is fully compliant with the U.S. Health

Care Financing Administration (HCFA) Internet Security Policy issued November 24, 1998.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations govern how health care providers, health plans and health care clearinghouses (i.e. covered entities) are to protect patient information. Agencies providing services to these covered entities that involve access to protected health information are considered business associates, and must agree by contract to comply with certain aspects of the privacy regulations.

As a software supplier, Esker is not a covered entity nor do we qualify as a business associate, because we do not provide services to or transactions for the health care industry that involve giving our company access to protected health information.

That said, Persona can provide secure and encrypted connections from client systems (local and remote) to legacy host systems, making the most of processes and procedures that are already in place in the health care industry and assisting in the compliance of HIPAA regulations.

## Resources

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The following are links to Common Criteria and Persona-related articles and websites:

[www.esker.com/persona](http://www.esker.com/persona)

[niap.nist.gov/cc-scheme/](http://niap.nist.gov/cc-scheme/)

[www.commoncriteria.org/](http://www.commoncriteria.org/)

[www.sans.org/rr/standards/ISOIEC\\_15408.php](http://www.sans.org/rr/standards/ISOIEC_15408.php)

[www.eweek.com/article2/0,3959,10183,00.asp](http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,3959,10183,00.asp)

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### About Esker

*Esker Software solutions connect people and information, providing access to enterprise host systems and enabling delivery of business information from any enterprise source to any destination. Founded in 1985, Esker is traded on Euronext—the French Stock Exchange (Le Nouveau Marché/Euroclear: 3581). Esker is a leading provider of host access and information delivery solutions, with offices in North America, Europe, and Asia/Pacific.*

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