

# Keep Your System Vehicles Inspected

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Making sure your computer system satisfactorily goes through Information Assurance Certification and Accreditation (C&A) is the same as getting your car inspected. It ensures that your system meets the official minimum security and information assurance (IA) maintenance standards. It also prevents equipment failures, and crashes, on the vital and very congested Army information superhighway, the LandWarNet.

C&A builds availability, integrity and confidentiality into every Army system. It ensures that the Army's LandWarNet is a reliable and formidable tool for the Warfighter. By eliminating security weaknesses upfront, the system can get into the fight better, faster and with less chance of shutting down or becoming dangerous for its users due to security breaches.

The C&A process is a logical step-by-step progression of tasks. That means it doesn't work too well if a system owner jumps into step three at the last moment without paying attention to steps one and two. Again, it's like taking care of a car. Think about safety during the manufacturing/building stage. Plan to make it safe. Then during the process make sure it has all the protective elements in place and make sure they work. If this is addressed at the start, then the entire C&A process goes a lot smoother. Also, keep it maintained so that it can pass the same kind of safety checks over its operational lifetime. Taking time early on saves headaches, time and most important, money at the end.

There are a wide range of cost and time constraints that affect every IT program and system. There never seems to be enough hours or money to get everything done – much like our personal lives. Unfortunately this leads to a “fix it when it breaks” mentality. The problem with that, like a car, it costs even more to repair a system after a breakdown than if the initial inspection and maintenance were performed completely and correctly. There is also the time lost that the system is unavailable if the C&A process needs are retrofitted.

There is also the issue of enforcement. The local Highway Patrol will prevent you from driving an unsafe vehicle on the road, much like IA officials will not allow uncertified systems to be placed on the LandWarNet. The reason is the same: it makes the (cyber) highway more dangerous. Having your system blocked from the LandWarNet until it meets standards is at least, very frustrating and at worse, very detrimental to mission success

While system owners are responsible for their cyber vehicles, many of them are not experienced system mechanics. It takes time to come up to speed on the complex and wide-ranging systems used. Yet, also like cars, there are detailed, easy-to-follow manuals and top-notch professional available to help you through the process. Army personnel can visit <https://informationassurance.us.army.mil/> for these resources.

Ensuring through C&A that a system is protected against intrusion and compromise, not only keeps Army operations and lives secure, but offers a peace of mind that allows system owners to focus on other important tasks.