

4. Information Classification for Security Purposes

What needs to be safeguarded?

At a minimum, information and assets that the department possesses should receive the reasonable care consistent with basic good administrative practice.

Beyond this, some information and assets are more sensitive or valuable and therefore require more stringent safeguards. In line with the provisions of the *Access to Information Act*, the *Privacy Act*, and the Government Security Policy, the department has grouped its information holdings into three categories:

- material that relates to the national interest
- material that lies outside the national interest but is nonetheless sensitive or valuable
- all other material, not all of which is in the public domain

If information can reasonably be expected to qualify for an exemption under the *Access to Information Act* or the *Privacy Act*, it must be either classified or designated.

Material assets important to the national interest or other sensitive or valuable assets also require more than basic protection. This includes, for example, all COSICS computer equipment.

Information given in confidence by other governments must be treated according to any agreements or understandings negotiated with them.

Information classified in the national interest

The Government Security Policy stipulates that information must be classified if its unauthorized disclosure or compromise could reasonably be expected to injure the national interest. For the purposes of the Security Policy, the "national interest" involves the "social, economic and political stability of Canada and, thereby, the security of the nation". Generally, the kind of information that is considered sensitive in the national interest is described in the access and privacy exemptions as involving:

- federal-provincial relations, international affairs, defence or the economic interests of Canada