

Some browsers' root certificates for Verisign, AT&T, and GTE CA's expired on Dec 31, 1999

Some customers using older browsers may receive a warning message after Jan 1, 2000 stating that the "Certificate Authority is Expired" when accessing a secure server using a certificate issued by Verisign, GTE, or AT&T.

The browsers that will experience this problem are Netscape v4.06 and older; also Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.01 and 4.5 for Macintosh have a similar problem. There is some discrepancy over the actual percentage of users that will see this problem, as there are no concrete numbers for the actual market share of these versions of browsers.

Solution ID: S03691

There is nothing that can be done for this problem on the server side except to buy a new secure certificate from a certificate authority whose root certificate does not expire yet (such as Thawte). Otherwise, the customers accessing the secure server must either upgrade their web browsers to a compliant version or install the latest root certificate from the Certificate Authority's web site.

It is recommended that store owners create an informational page on their web site detailing this problem for their customers. This page should let your customers know what to do to fix the warning message, and provide links to the browser's web site to upgrade their browser and/or the CA's web site to download the latest root certificate. It's also important to note that if the customer clicks to continue through the warning message, a normal SSL connection will be made and all information will be encrypted as it normally would.

Additional Information:

1. Entrust is a Certificate Authority whose root certificate does not expire at the end of this year. They are estimating that 25% of users will be affected, but no verifiable references are made to how this number was reached. More info can be found at:

<http://www.entrust.net/products/rootca.htm>

2. Verisign estimates that only about 2% of internet users will be affected by this problem using information from www.statmarket.com. More information on what Verisign is saying about the problem can be found at:

<http://www.verisign.com/server/cus/rootcert/facts.html>

3. GTE provides a browser compatibility table to document which browsers will be affected, as well as an FAQ for the root rollover issue:

<http://www.gte.com/cybertrust/resources/root/root.html>

<https://support.shopsite.com/KBase/questions/2129/>