

Welcome

This is the inaugural issue of an informal newsletter the InfraGard Vermont Members Alliance (IVMA) plans to publish to our general mailing list. Our goal is to let you know what is happening within the Vermont InfraGard chapter and with InfraGard regionally and nationally. This is your newsletter, so tell us what you want.

The mission of IVMA is to share security information that is not generally available to the public, to facilitate access to expert knowledge, and to provide programs to reach out to the Vermont community and especially to businesses. The goal of this newsletter is to keep you informed of all our activities.

We need to open new lines of communication, because it is becoming increasingly difficult to schedule meetings and fewer people are able to participate even when we do. However, communication is even more important in times like these when IG membership can be most valuable. Security threats are not diminishing as the economy slumps. In reality, the opposite. Indeed, we may well be in for some big challenges as security issues become increasingly widespread and frequent, complex, and potentially far more costly. Therefore, we can all benefit from better communications and from social networking opportunities inherent in our organization.

Benefits & Values of IG Membership

There are many unique benefits from IG membership. There is also considerable value that members can provide to their employers, clients, customers, friends and colleagues. Through the IG members' alliance, we can better protect ourselves and avoid risks by accessing information not publically available. While the government has overall responsibility for protecting the country, there is no disputing that the intelligence and law enforcement communities are greatly understaffed, underfunded, and often short of people with strong security training and experience.

However, IG can provide unique and valuable assistance. We have local knowledge, are already in the trenches, and may be better able to observe trouble in the making that can be under the government's radars. Unusual events that we can report may well aggregate into actionable intelligence. Moreover, we are helping to protect ourselves. Report any unusual security happenings directly to our FBI Coordinator, Tom Leene.

We also need more members to widen our scope: People we can share security knowledge with and they with us. Visit the public IVMA Website at www.vtinfragard.org for contacts to our officers and the FBI Coordinator, membership information, and for past issues of *IVMA News* for reference and for new members.

Anonymous Postings

We are beginning a process whereby anyone can post anonymously to either of our two mailing lists. Anyone can simply forward his or her message directly to any Executive Committee member who will look it over and then post it. Only the name of the person who posts it will show. It is likely that the author is already on one or both of the lists (members-only and general mailing, i.e., this list). He or she will then see the posted message, can read any replies, may even comment directly to the list circumspectly, or can again reply anonymously.

There are many situations where anonymous posting is legitimate and can be useful. Employees, clients, consultants or vendors may not be able to reveal their names upon risk of censure. However, their messages should not reveal identifiable names of persons or organizations or places or disclose proprietary informa-

tion. The purpose is to ask about problems and not to libel or defame or embarrass anyone. The value is to get questions and information out to those who may be able to assist and to the many with a need to know.

Anonymity is a legitimate means to do this, but the Executive Committee member will first look over any request, determine which mailing list is appropriate, and may discuss it with Tom Leene. Remember also what we can be legally compelled to reveal the name of the author.

Anyone who wants to be added to the general mailing list need only contact Gary Kessler. He is somewhat selective and we are not obliged to include just anyone. Member's names are added automatically to both lists.

General Meetings

Efforts for a general meeting in March and another in May have all fallen through. It was not possible to align a speaker, venue and a date, although there were many, many attempts. People were too busy, away or otherwise unable to attend. We are trying now for a late-August meeting, provided announcements can go out very soon. Otherwise, we will try for a November meeting when there will be more time to prepare, announce and publicize. We hope to use a large venue where we can have speakers and a workshop and invite many from the business community.

If anyone has suggestions or can help, contact Rich Parker or Gary Kessler directly.

Executive Committee to Meet Monthly

On June 10th, the Executive Committee and officers met over lunch in Burlington to report on what's happening, discuss new projects, and decide what needs to be done and when. We have long needed to meet on a regular basis, especially since our general meetings have become farther apart due mostly to the sagging economy. Henceforth, we will meet monthly -- except January and one other month. Alternate meetings will be face-to-face, which everyone feels is most productive, and try to hold the other meetings by conference call. There will also be an agenda in advance of each meeting and minutes afterwards, so we all know who has agreed to do what and when.

Doug Oftedahl has had to step down as VP and from the ExecCom due to pressure from his day job. Doug has served IVMA in many roles and for many years and we all owe him a debt of gratitude. In his stead, the remaining ExecCom members appointed me as VP with a particular emphasis on communications, including this newsletter. We also approved anonymous posting to either of our mailing lists (see above), ideas for a general meeting (see above), and the need to expand the ExecCom that will be covered in the next newsletter. The ExecCom vacancy is still open; anyone interested should contact Rich Parker or Gary Kessler.

News from National

It is likely that all IG members will be re-vetted by the FBI, once the application process is revamped so that more is done electronically. Membership processing is now done manually at Louisiana State University under contract with the FBI. There may be a few more questions added to the new form. The process will still take time, however, especially when any information received appears derogatory and the FBI Coordinator must then personally interview the applicant. There will still be no IG membership fee or dues or any cost to join IVMA, although some chapters charge local dues. No schedule yet, but we will keep you posted.

Jon Miller recently stepped down due to pressures from his day job. He was the Northeast Regional Representative for the twenty chapters, including ours. This is unfortunate, because he is highly capable. The slot is still open if anyone has the skills and can afford the time and commitment. Plans for a mini-Congress in New York City in April or Philadelphia in May died in the making. They had hoped for the first day of briefings and voting at the local FBI field office and then attending a security conference in town that week. I suspect the deal breaker was absence of sponsorship to defray travel and hotel for the distant chapters.

The 2009 Annual National Congress is coming later this year and will again be conducted via a secure video teleconference from Washington to FBI field offices. For us, this is probably Albany, NY, which is too far and too much time for many from IVMA to attend. Once there are details, we'll see if we can field some delegates. There will probably be no travel or other expenses reimbursed.

Membership Benefits

There are several benefits available to IG members and we will mention a few in each issue.

Vetted IG members can bypass most airport security and some other federal or perhaps state checkpoints via the Registered Travel CLEAR program in which IG participates. They issue a special ID card that can save a frequent traveler considerable time and trouble. Look for details on the national members-only secure Web site. IG may be downplaying or discontinuing participation, so act quickly if you're interested. Word just in: the CLEAR program suspended operations on 06/22/2009. IG is looking into alternatives.

IG members who want security training and certification can get this at a discount or practically free. Some of you may have received these announcements, but my guess is not. First, the SANS institute has a pilot program and offers a 5% discount to IG members. For some details and a schedule of regional classroom and online training visit <https://www.sans.org/training/infragard.php>. SANS will rebate to both national and the local chapter, but the program still seems a bit pricey. Members can also check other training that may offer us good prices, such as IC3.com, Champlain College, and other colleges.

There is also a free cyber-security training initiative for IG members from the Center for Information Security. This includes fourteen online lessons with narration. Anyone can take this and then pay \$25 to take an examination for a personalized certificate of completion. However, IG members pay only \$20. I do not have broadband yet, so I haven't looked further. But what the heck. Free is free, so if you don't like it, drop out. Details are at www.InfraGardAwareness.com.

Finally

What are your thoughts on utilizing our chapter as a social network? We already have the mailing lists for discussion, but we can also offer free Help Wanted and Help Available and other announcements of interest to you and your colleagues. This can lead to paid assignments for anyone who may want to freelance, moonlight, or even work anonymously though somebody else. There may also be future IG programs that can pay expenses and honoraria. Let me have your ideas.

Your comments and suggestions are welcome, as are announcements, items of general interest, and submissions. We all unpaid volunteers, but we can still collaborate to help and assist one another in many ways.

Best wishes,

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