
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY BOARD FOR AUDITORS
COMMITTEE FOR AUDITING STANDARDS

IRBA Staff Audit Practice Alert 6: Protection and Retention of Client Data

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The Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors (IRBA) has issued the IRBA Staff Audit Practice Alert 6: *Protection and Retention of Client Data* (IRBA Staff Audit Practice Alert), for use by registered auditors. This IRBA Staff Audit Practice Alert has been prepared by the Protection and Retention of Client Data Task Group of the IRBA's Committee for Auditing Standards (CFAS).

The audit industry is experiencing a wave of digitisation, with an increasing digital processing of data. The unprecedented challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic have demanded that clients and firms work remotely, and this presents circumstances where more client data is being exchanged on technological platforms (some of which are unsecure). As a result, these new ways of working are creating more threats of data security breaches.

This IRBA Staff Audit Practice Alert serves to provide auditors with guidance and considerations with respect to the protection and retention of client data. It covers the following topics:

- Possible implications on the audit firm if the confidentiality of client data is compromised;
- Possible threats to the protection and retention of client data;
- Possible developments and improvements of the control environment that can be implemented by an audit firm to protect and retain client data.

This IRBA Staff Audit Practice Alert **does not constitute an authoritative pronouncement** from the IRBA; nor does it amend or override the International Standards on Auditing, South African Auditing Practice Statements or South African Guides (collectively called pronouncements). **Also, this IRBA Staff Audit Practice Alert is not meant to be exhaustive.** Reading this IRBA Staff Audit Practice Alert is not a substitute for reading the abovementioned pronouncements, as they are the authoritative texts.

The IRBA Staff Audit Practice Alert is available in PDF format and may be downloaded from the IRBA website at www.irba.co.za. Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the Standards Department by email at standards@irba.co.za.

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About the IRBA

The objective of the IRBA is to endeavour to protect the financial interests of the South African public and international investors in South Africa through the effective and appropriate regulation of audits conducted by registered auditors, in accordance with internationally recognised standards and processes.

The statutory responsibilities of the CFAS are to assist the IRBA to develop, maintain, adopt, issue or prescribe auditing pronouncements; to consider relevant international changes by monitoring developments by other auditing standard-setting bodies and sharing information where requested; and to promote and ensure the relevance of auditing pronouncements.