



Communications & Public Relations Newsletter
September 2018

SSL - Is It Important or Just Another Set of Initials They Want me to Remember?

Have you noticed that some websites use “https” but some are still using “http”? The “s” indicates that the website has obtained a Secure Sockets Layer (aka SSL) Certificate. SSL is a technology that provides security for sensitive information as it travels on the internet. It is needed even if your club is not accepting credit card payments through its website. It helps to insure privacy and protection of the data on your club’s website as well as your visitors’ information.

When we use the internet our information is passed from computer to computer until we get to the final website we are looking for. Any computer in between can see credit card numbers, usernames and passwords, and other sensitive information if it is not encrypted with an SSL certificate. This is how much of the identity theft occurs. When an SSL certificate is used, it protects from hackers and identity thieves.

If your club is using its website for conference registrations or fundraising orders, it will be required to have an SSL Certificate to accept credit card information on the website. All of the credit card processors have announced they are requiring SSL Certificates.

Additionally, many of the search engines such as Google have indicated that websites which are not secure will appear lower in the search results even if a searcher types in the exact website address. Google is also now warning users if they are trying to go to an unsecure website. Most users are not going to risk continuing on to a site that has been identified as not secure! Other popular search engines are taking similar action.

To enable SSL on a website, your club will need to get an SSL Certificate that identifies it and install it on its web server. If the club is using a hosted website through a third party such as Tripod or Go Daddy, the SSL Certificate can be obtained through them. With newer websites, it may automatically be provided.

One of the concerns being raised is the cost to obtain the SSL Certificate. We are seeing costs as low as \$20 a year to as much as thousands a year. Every website provider will have its own cost. Can your club simply ignore this? NO. The bottom line - if your club is going to have a meaningful and useful website, it has to appear in search results and users can’t be frightened away by the lack of security. Every club must make sure it has an SSL Certificate for its website.

If you want more information a very user friendly article can be found at <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/what-is-ssl>

If your club needs more information, please reach out to one of the members of the CPR Committee or your state’s Communications and Public Relations Chairman. We are all here to help.

Vicky Trimmer
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Committee Member

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