

## NSTS Batch Trace Advice

Dear Colleague

In line with our continual process of review and improvement of NSTS Batch Tracing, we write to confirm and advise you of the following:

1. **Acceptable Media:** Batch Trace files may only be submitted on CD or on diskette. Re-writable CD (CD-RW) is the preferred media-based method of submission. Tapes (DAT, DLT, etc) are now no longer acceptable. A **new TS2** (Batch Submission) form has been drafted to reflect this and is attached - please ensure a **new** one is completed and included with every submission.
2. **Encryption:** Batch trace files **must** be encrypted to AES 256-bit strength using WinZip v9 or above (current version is 11) – the Windows 'zip' facility does not do this and should not be used. The password/phrase used to encrypt the file should be at least twelve characters long and follow the password/phrase guidelines (see separate sheet).  
The encryption password/phrase for the batch must be emailed to Atos Origin at [NSTSBatchTracingACP@nsts.nhs.uk](mailto:NSTSBatchTracingACP@nsts.nhs.uk) when the batch is sent off; the email must have your organisation's Access Agreement Number (e.g. AAN123) and the Batch Trace User ID in the subject line.
3. **Delivery method:** Media containing encrypted batch trace file(s) must be sent (as usual) to Atos Origin's Andover Data Centre using a secure delivery method such as either Royal Mail Special Delivery or a Courier approved by your organisation, but please ensure that the package can be tracked from sender to addressee and will have to be signed for.
4. **Failure to comply:** Any batch trace data received that is (i) not encrypted to AES 256-bit strength; or (ii) has an 'unsafe' or incorrect password/phrase (see guidelines); or (iii) is sent in by non-secure delivery method (e.g. 1st Class Post); will not be processed. Instead: an NSTS security incident will be raised; the batch trace user will be contacted to resubmit the data securely; and the media will then be destroyed.
5. **PKI:** Organisations wishing to submit tracing batches by PKI-encrypted email are encouraged to do so. Please see the following for more information and guidance:  
<http://www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/systemsandservices/nsts/docs/index.html#pkiencripted>

Please contact us at [nsts.servicemgmt@nhs.net](mailto:nsts.servicemgmt@nhs.net) with any queries.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Philip Nicholson  
NSTS Security Manager  
NHS Connecting for Health

December 2007

## NSTS Batch Trace Request Form - TS2

- ◆ A completed copy of this form MUST accompany every batch that you send to the Tracing Service.
- ◆ If you have any questions or require assistance in completing this form please contact the Atos Origin Help Desk on 0121 788 4001.
  
- ◆ **All sections must be completed. Failure to do so may result in delays.**

**Please send completed forms with the accompanying media to:**

NSTS Batch Tracing Department,  
Atos Origin,  
Andover Data Centre,  
Shepherds Spring Lane,  
Andover,  
SP10 1DL.

<b><u>Details of submitting organisation:</u></b>	
<b>NSTS Access Agreement Number:</b>	
<b>Batch Tracing User ID:</b>	
<b>Submitted by:</b>	
<b>Date Submitted:</b>	

<b><u>Request file details:</u></b>		
<b>Media type: Please circle:</b>	<b>Floppy Disk</b>	<b>Compact disk</b>
<b>Number of Records:</b>		
<b>Filename:</b>		
<b>Do you require the post-coding of your input data?</b>		<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>Ensure data file is encrypted to AES256 specification using Winzip10 or better.</b>		<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>Ensure encryption password has been emailed to NSTSBatchTracingACP@nsts.nhs.uk</b>		<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>Delivery method used. No other delivery method acceptable.</b>	<b>Royal Mail Special Delivery</b>	<b>Other Courier</b>

**Notes:**

1. You must complete the above details. Failure to do so prevents us from processing your batch.
2. It is not necessary for you to provide any additional information. In particular, you should not write your address on this form. This will be taken from your batch tracing user ID.

## NSTS password/phrase guidelines for batch encryption to AES 256 bit strength

While it has been reported that it might be necessary to use a password/phrase as long as 64 characters to take full advantage of AES 256-bit encryption, we recommend that a pass-phrase of no less than 12 characters is used for encryption of NSTS batch trace files. This achieves a good compromise between security and usability.

For optimal effect, a password/phrase should therefore:

- Be at least twelve characters long;
- Contain a mix of alphabetic, numeric and 'special' characters (such as ; - < ? #);
- not use an alphabetic or numeric series, either backwards or forwards (i.e. ABCDEFG, GFEDCBA, ABCABCABC 1234567 or 7654321, 123123123);
- not use a string of identical letters or numbers (i.e. AAAAAAA or 1111111);
- not use a common keyboard shortcut (i.e. ASDFG or QWERTY).

A pass-phrase is to be preferred and might be something like:

- A 'pseudo' phrase such as 5pm\_Go\_Walking (please don't use this!);
- A 'word' using the first one or two characters from a sentence plus some added special characters (such as ev go\_bo de fa short for 'every good boy deserves favour' which some of you may recall from music lessons);
- A sentence, perhaps with additional characters, selected from a book or newspaper.

Passwords/phrases should, of course, be changed regularly and not less frequently than every month. For batch encryption one can use a fresh pass-phrase for each batch, of course.

NSTS Service Management Team  
NHS Connecting for Health

December 2007