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**DTI eSecurity News - You would not leave your front door unlocked...****What is a firewall and what do they do?**

Most people would not leave their front door unlocked when they leave home. You should not leave your home computer's "internet front door" unlocked either. This newsletter provides some introductory information about obtaining and installing a firewall on your home computer, to ensure the "internet front door" is secure.

A computer firewall can be thought of as a security guard standing at the only entrance to a building. Multiple firewalls protect your work computer from outside attackers and intruders that could enter from the internet. Just like a security guard, a firewall inspects every bit of information that attempts to contact your computer. A firewall can be configured to block certain internet data from coming in, while still allowing legitimate data to pass through to your computer. Firewalls are especially important at home if you have an "always-on" internet connection, such as a cable broadband internet connection or a digital subscriber line (DSL).

What types of firewalls are available?

There are two basic types of firewalls available, hardware and software. A hardware firewall is sometimes referred to as a network firewall because it can protect an entire network of computers at the internet connection. The routers that are utilized by "always-on" internet connections, such as the one pictured to the right, have firewall functionalities. A hardware firewall can 1) protect multiple computers at once, 2) allow multiple computers to share a single internet connection, and 3) serve as a separate device, from your computer, that runs its own secure software. Hardware firewalls also hide your computer[s] from being visible on the internet. The disadvantage, however, is cost. If you are only securing one computer, a hardware firewall may not be worth the average price of \$60 or more.

A software firewall runs as a program on your computer, or it may be built into your operating system (Windows XP SP2 and Vista). They have many of the same protection features as a hardware firewall, but most are not designed to share an internet connection. Many software firewalls are free. However, just like any other software package on your computer, software firewalls are vulnerable to viruses, trojans, and other malware. Therefore, it is important to use anti-virus software in conjunction with both hardware and software firewalls, to operate as securely as possible.

**Which type is better?**

Both solutions offer great protection from internet threats right off the shelf. A hardware firewall is recommended, if the price is acceptable, because it offers protection from threats before they even enter your computer. However, software firewalls may be easier to maintain, especially for single computer installations. It is a matter of which solution best fits your individual needs.

Where do I obtain a firewall?

Both firewalls are available at retail outlets such as Best Buy, Circuit City, CompUSA, Staples, and various other locations.

Want more information?

[Firewall Frequently Asked Questions](#)
[TechTarget Firewall Buying Guide](#)

Questions or comments?
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