



# WS-Security Profile of the OASIS Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML)

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**Abstract:**

This document specifies the WS-Security profile of SAML. WS-Security is a proposal for a standard set of SOAP extensions (message headers) that can be used to implement integrity and confidentiality. WS-Security also supports the secure addition of security tokens to SOAP messages. This specification defines how to use WS-Security headers for the secure addition of SAML assertions to SOAP messages.

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## 72 Introduction

73 This document specifies the WS-Security [WS-Sec] profile of SAML [SAMLCore]. WS-Security is  
74 a proposal for a standard set of SOAP [SOAP1.1] extensions (message headers) that can be  
75 used to implement integrity and confidentiality. WS-Security also supports the secure addition of  
76 security tokens to SOAP messages. This specification builds on these foundations in defining a  
77 message format that uses WS-Security headers for the secure addition of SAML assertions to  
78 SOAP messages.

### 79 1.1 Notation

80 The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD",  
81 "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this specification are to be  
82 interpreted as described in IETF RFC 2119 [RFC2119].

83 `Listings of productions or other normative code appear like this.`

84

85 `Example code listings appear like this.`

86 **Note:** Non-normative notes and explanations appear like this.

87 Conventional XML namespace prefixes are used throughout this specification to stand for their  
88 respective namespaces as follows, whether or not a namespace declaration is present in the  
89 example:

- 90 • The prefix `saml`: stands for the SAML assertion namespace [SAMLCore].
- 91 • The prefix `samlp`: stands for the SAML request-response protocol namespace  
92 [SAMLCore].
- 93 • The prefix `ds`: stands for the W3C XML Signature namespace,  
94 `http://www.w3.org/2000/09/xmlsig#` [XMLSig].
- 95 • The prefix `SOAP-ENV`: stands for the SOAP 1.1 namespace,  
96 `http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope` [SOAP1.1].
- 97 • The prefix `wsse`: stands for the WS-Security 1.0 namespace  
98 `http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/ws/2002/04/secext` [WS-Sec].

---

## 99 2 WS-Security Profile of SAML

100 The WS-Security profile of SAML is a realization of Scenarios 3-1 and 3-3 of the SAML  
101 requirements document [SAMLReqs] in the context of SOAP. It is based on a single interaction  
102 between a *sender* and a *receiver*, as follows:

- 103 1. The sender obtains one or more SAML assertions and/or assertion identifiers.
- 104 2. The sender adds the assertions and/or assertion identifiers to a SOAP message using WS-  
105 Security headers.
- 106 3. The sender sends the SOAP message with the included assertions and assertion identifiers  
107 to the receiver. The SOAP message may be sent over any protocol for which a SOAP  
108 protocol binding is available [SOAP1.1].
- 109 4. The receiver attempts to process the assertions and assertion identifiers present in the SOAP  
110 message. If it cannot process them, it returns an error message. If it can process them, it  
111 does so and also processes the rest of the SOAP message in an application-dependent way.

112 In the terminology of WS-Security, SAML assertions or assertion identifiers constitute *claims*.  
113 Additional components such as signatures may also be required to provide *proof-of-possession* or  
114 demonstrations of knowledge at the sender known only to senders with a particular relationship to  
115 the claims.

116 See [SAMLBind] for the definition of the SOAP binding for SAML, as opposed to the WS-  
117 Security profile of SAML.

### 118 2.1 Required Information

119 **Identification:** urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:profiles:ws-security

120 **Contact information:** security-services-comment@lists.oasis-open.org

121 **Description:** Given below.

122 **Updates:** None.

### 123 2.2 SAML Assertions and SOAP Headers

124 SOAP provides a flexible header mechanism, which may be used for extending SOAP payloads  
125 with additional information. Rules for SOAP headers are given in [SOAP1.1] §4.2. WS-Security  
126 extends this foundation by proposing the use of a `<wsse:Security>` header element to provide  
127 a mechanism for attaching security-related information targeted at a specific receiver.

128 SAML assertions and references to assertion identifiers **MUST** be contained within the  
129 `<wsse:Security>` element, which in turn is carried within the `<SOAP-ENV:Header>` element.

130 Every SAML assertion **MUST** be signed by the issuer following the guidelines in [SAMLCore].

131 Assertion identifier references and information about assertion retrieval services **MUST** be carried  
132 within the `<wsse:SecurityTokenReference>` element. One or more

133 `<saml:AssertionIDReference>` elements holding the assertion identifier references may be  
134 included within the `<wsse:SecurityTokenReference>` element. The URI attribute of the  
135 `<wsse:Reference>` element specifies the location of a SAML responder implementing the  
136 SAML SOAP binding [SAMLBind].

137 Example:

```
138 <wsse:SecurityTokenReference>  
139   <saml:AssertionIDReference>XVB12#$21abc</AssertionIDReference>  
140   <wsse:Reference URI=http://www.example.com/SAMLservice"/>  
141 </wsse:SecurityTokenReference>
```

142 Two standard SOAP attributes are available for use with top-level header elements: `actor` and  
143 `mustUnderstand`. [WS-Sec] § 4 provides recommendations for the use of the `actor` attribute  
144 with the `<wsse:Security>` element. Use of the `mustUnderstand` attribute is application-  
145 dependent and no normative use is specified herein.

## 146 2.3 Error Codes

147 If the receiver is able to access the SAML assertions contained in the  
148 `<wsse:Security>` header, but is unable to process them, the receiver MUST use one of the  
149 fault codes listed in [WS-Sec] §6. A receiver MUST not return any other SAML-related fault code.  
150 Reasons why the receiver may be unable to process SAML assertions, include, but are not  
151 limited to:

- 152 1. The assertion contains a `<saml:Condition>` element that the receiver does not  
153 understand.
- 154 2. The signature on the assertion is invalid.
- 155 3. The receiver does not accept assertions from the issuer of the assertion in question.
- 156 4. The receiver does not understand the extension schema used in the assertion.

157 It is RECOMMENDED that the `<SOAP-ENV:Faultstring>` element contain an informative  
158 message. This specification does not specify any normative text. Sending parties MUST NOT rely  
159 on specific contents in the `<SOAP-ENV:Faultstring>` element.

160 Following is an example of providing fault information:

```
161 <SOAP-ENV:Fault>  
162   <SOAP-ENV:Faultcode>wsse:UnsupportedSecurityToken</SOAP-ENV:Faultcode>  
163   <SOAP-ENV:Faultstring>SAML Version Error</SOAP-ENV:Faultstring>  
164 </SOAP-ENV:Fault>
```

## 165 2.4 Processing Model

166 The receiver MUST resolve each assertion reference carried within a  
167 `<wsse:SecurityTokenReference>` element and acquire an assertion for each such  
168 reference. This MAY be accomplished by the receiver sending a `<samlp:Request>` message  
169 with `<saml:AssertionIDReference>` elements to the SAML service described by the URI attribute  
170 of the `<wsse:Reference>` element. If the receiver is unable to resolve an assertion reference it  
171 MUST return a `wsse:SecurityTokenUnavailable` error to the sender.

172 The sender and receiver MUST ensure the data integrity of SOAP messages and contained  
173 assertions. A variety of different techniques are available for providing data integrity, including, for  
174 example, use of TLS/SSL, digital signatures over the SOAP message, and IPsec.

175 When a receiver processes a SOAP message containing SAML assertions, it MUST make an  
176 explicit determination of the relationship between subject of the assertions and the sender. Merely  
177 obtaining a SOAP message containing assertions carries no implication about the sender's right  
178 to possess and communicate the included assertions. A variety of means are available for making  
179 such a determination, including, for example, explicit policies at the receiver, authentication of  
180 sender, and use of digital signature.

181 Two message formats for ensuring the data integrity of a SOAP message and included  
182 assertions, `HolderOfKey` and `SenderVouches`, are described below. The `HolderOfKey`  
183 format has the additional property that it implies a specific relationship between the sender and  
184 subject of the assertions included within the SOAP message. Senders and receivers  
185 implementing the WS-Security Profile of SAML MUST implement both formats.

## 186 2.5 HolderOfKey Format

187 The following section describe the `HolderOfKey` format for ensuring the data integrity of a  
188 SOAP message and included assertions.

### 189 2.5.1 Sender

190 In this case, the sender and the subject are the same entity. The sender obtains one or more  
191 assertions or assertion identifiers from one or more authorities. Each assertion or referenced  
192 assertion MUST include the following `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element:

```
193 <saml:SubjectConfirmation>  
194   <saml:ConfirmationMethod>  
195     urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:cm:holder-of-key  
196   </saml:ConfirmationMethod>  
197   <ds:KeyInfo>...</ds:KeyInfo>  
198 </saml:SubjectConfirmation>
```

199 The `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element carries information about the sender's key within  
200 the `<ds:KeyInfo>` element. The `<ds:KeyInfo>` element provides varied ways for describing  
201 information about the sender's public or secret key.

202 In addition to the assertions, the sender MUST include a `<ds:Signature>` element within the  
203 WS-Sec `<wsse:Security>` header. Section 4.5 of [WS-Sec] provides recommendations for  
204 the canonicalization and transformation algorithms that should be used to construct the signature.

205 Following the recommendations in [WS-Sec] §4, the `<ds:Signature>` element should be  
206 added before the SAML assertions. The `<ds:Signature>` element MUST apply to the relevant  
207 SAML assertion and `<wsse:SecurityTokenReference>` elements found in the  
208 `<wsse:Security>` element, and all the relevant portions of the `<SOAP-ENV:Body>` element, as  
209 required by the application. Specific applications might require that the signature also apply to  
210 additional elements in SOAP header.

### 211 2.5.2 Receiver

212 The receiver MUST verify that each assertion carries a `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>`  
213 element of the following form:

```
214 <saml:SubjectConfirmation>  
215   <saml:ConfirmationMethod>  
216     urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:cm:holder-of-key  
217   </saml:ConfirmationMethod>  
218   <ds:KeyInfo>...</ds:KeyInfo>  
219 </saml:SubjectConfirmation>
```

220 The receiving party MUST follow the recommendations of [WS-Sec] §4.5.3 for verifying integrity  
221 of the `<wsse:Security>/<ds:Signature>` sub-element of the SOAP message. The receiving  
222 party SHOULD use the sender's public or information about a secret key carried within the  
223 `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>/<ds:KeyInfo>` element carried within each assertion.

224 **Note:** The `<ds:KeyInfo>` element is used only for checking integrity of  
225 assertion attachment (message integrity). Therefore, there is no requirement that  
226 the receiver validate the key or certificate. This suggests that, if needed, a sender  
227 can generate a public/private key pair and utilize it for this purpose.

228 Once the above steps have been completed, the receiver can further process the assertions and  
229 SOAP message contents with the assurance that portions of the SOAP message that fall within  
230 the scope of the digital signature have been constructed by the sender and have not been altered  
231 by an intermediary. Further, the sender has provided proof of possession of the corresponding  
232 private-key (or secret-key) component of the information included in the

233 <saml:SubjectConfirmation>/<ds:KeyInfo> element included in each assertion. If the  
234 receiver believes the assertions to be valid, then the information contained in the assertions MAY  
235 be considered to be describing the sender.

### 236 2.5.3 Example

237 The following example illustrates the HolderOfKey message format:

```
238 <?xml:version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
239 <SOAP-ENV:Envelope
240   xmlns:SOAP-ENV="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/"
241   xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance"
242   xmlns:xsd="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema">
243
244   <SOAP-ENV:Header>
245     <wsse:Security>
246       <saml:Assertion
247         xmlns:saml="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:assertion"
248         MajorVersion="1" MinorVersion="0"
249         AssertionID="2sxJu9g/vvLG9sAN9bKp/8q0NKU="
250         Issuer="www.example.com"
251         IssueInstant="2002-06-19T16:58:33.173Z">
252         <saml:Conditions
253           NotBefore="2002-06-19T16:53:33.173Z"
254           NotOnOrAfter="2002-06-19T17:08:33.173Z"/>
255
256         <saml:AuthenticationStatement
257           AuthenticationMethod="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:am:password"
258           AuthenticationInstant="2002-06-19T16:57:30.000Z">
259           <saml:Subject>
260             <saml:NameIdentifier
261               NameQualifier="www.example.com"
262               Format="">
263               uid=joe,ou=people,ou=saml-demo,o=example.com
264             </saml:NameIdentifier>
265             <saml:SubjectConfirmation>
266               <saml:ConfirmationMethod>
267                 urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:cm:holder-of-key
268               </saml:ConfirmationMethod>
269               <ds:KeyInfo>
270                 <ds:KeyValue>...</ds:KeyValue>
271               </ds:KeyInfo>
272             </saml:SubjectConfirmation>
273           </saml:Subject>
274         </saml:AuthenticationStatement>
275
276         <saml:AttributeStatement>
277           <saml:Subject>
278             <saml:NameIdentifier
279               NameQualifier="www.example.com"
280               Format="">
281             uid=joe,ou=people,ou=saml-demo,o=baltimore.com
282           </saml:NameIdentifier>
283           <saml:SubjectConfirmation>
284             <saml:ConfirmationMethod>
285               urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:cm:holder-of-key
286             </saml:ConfirmationMethod>
287             <ds:KeyInfo>
288               <ds:KeyValue>...</ds:KeyValue>
289             </ds:KeyInfo>
290           </saml:SubjectConfirmation>
291         </saml:Subject>
```

```

292
293     <saml:Attribute
294       AttributeName="MemberLevel"
295       AttributeNamespace="http://www.oasis-
296 open.org/Catalyst2002/attributes">
297       <saml:AttributeValue>gold</saml:AttributeValue>
298     </saml:Attribute>
299     <saml:Attribute
300       AttributeName="E-mail"
301       AttributeNamespace="http://www.oasis-
302 open.org/Catalyst2002/attributes">
303       <saml:AttributeValue>joe@yahoo.com</saml:AttributeValue>
304     </saml:Attribute>
305   </saml:AttributeStatement>
306   <ds:Signature>...</ds:Signature>
307 </saml:Assertion>
308 <ds:Signature>
309   <ds:SignedInfo>...</ds:SignedInfo>
310   <ds:SignatureValue>
311 HJJWbvqW9E84vJVQkjjLLA6nNvBX7mY00TZhwBdFNDElqscSXZ5Ekw==
312   </ds:SignatureValue>
313 </ds:Signature>
314 </wsse:Security>
315 </SOAP-ENV:Header>
316
317 <SOAP-ENV:Body>
318   <ReportRequest>
319     <TickerSymbol>SUNW</TickerSymbol>
320   </ReportRequest>
321 </SOAP-ENV:Body>
322 </SOAP-ENV:Envelope>

```

## 323 2.6 SenderVouches Format

324 The following section describe the `SenderVouches` format for ensuring the data integrity of a  
325 SOAP message and included assertions.

### 326 2.6.1 Sender

327 In this case, the sender and subject MAY be distinct entities. The sender obtains one or more  
328 assertions or assertion identifiers from one or more authorities and includes them in a SOAP  
329 message. Each assertion or referenced assertion MUST include the following

330 `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element:

```

331 <saml:SubjectConfirmation>
332   <saml:ConfirmationMethod>
333   urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:cm:sender-vouches
334   </saml:ConfirmationMethod>
335 </saml:SubjectConfirmation>

```

336 In addition to the assertions, the sender MUST include a `<ds:Signature>` element within the  
337 WS-Security `<wsse:Security>` element. The `<ds:Signature>` element MUST apply to the  
338 relevant SAML assertion and `<wsse:SecurityTokenReference>` elements found in the  
339 `<wsse:Security>` element, and all the relevant portions of the `<SOAP-ENV:Body>` element, as  
340 required by the application. Specific applications might require that the signature also apply to  
341 additional elements in SOAP header.

342 Following the XML Signature specification, the sender MAY include a `<ds:KeyInfo>` element  
343 within the `<ds:Signature>` element. The `<ds:KeyInfo>` element provides varied ways for  
344 describing information about the sender's public or secret key. If it is omitted, the receiver is  
345 expected to identify the key based on context.

## 346 2.6.2 Receiver

347 The receiver MUST verify that each assertion carries a `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>`  
348 element of the following form:

```
349 <saml:SubjectConfirmation>  
350   <saml:ConfirmationMethod>  
351   urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:cm:sender-vouches  
352   </saml:ConfirmationMethod>  
353 </saml:SubjectConfirmation>
```

354 The receiving party MUST check the validity of the signature found in the  
355 `<wsse:Security>/<ds:Signature>` element. Information about the sender's public or secret  
356 key either is found in the `<wsse:Security>/<ds:Signature>/<ds:KeyInfo>` element  
357 carried within the SOAP envelope or is based on application context.

358 Once the above steps have been completed, the receiver can further process the assertions and  
359 SOAP message contents with the assurance that portions of the SOAP message that fall within  
360 the scope of the digital signature have been constructed by the sender and have not been altered  
361 by an intermediary.

362 In contrast to the `HolderOfKey` case, information about the sender either is provided by the  
363 contents of the `<ds:KeyInfo>` element found within the signature or is based on application  
364 context.

## 365 2.6.3 Example

366 The following example illustrates the `SenderVouches` message format:

```
367 <SOAP-ENV:Envelope  
368   xmlns:SOAP-ENV="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/"  
369   <SOAP-ENV:Header  
370     xmlns:saml="..."  
371     <wsse:Security>  
372       <wsse:SecurityTokenReference>  
373         <saml:AssertionIDReference>XVB12#$21abc</AssertionIDReference>  
374         <wsse:Reference URI="http://www.example.com/SAMLservice"/>  
375       </wsse:SecurityTokenReference>  
376       <saml:Assertion>...</saml:Assertion>  
377       <ds:Signature>...  
378         <ds:KeyInfo>...</ds:KeyInfo>  
379       </ds:Signature>  
380     </wsse:Security>  
381   </SOAP-ENV:Header>  
382   <SOAP-ENV:Body>  
383     ...  
384   </SOAP-ENV:Body>  
385 </SOAP-ENV:Envelope>
```

## 386 2.7 Additional Issues

387 The processing models described in this section does not take into account replay attacks,  
388 authentication of sender by receiver, authentication of receiver by sender, or confidentiality.  
389 These concerns must be addressed by means other than those described in this section.

---

## 390 3 Security Considerations

391 This profile defines methods for securely attaching SAML assertions to a SOAP document. SOAP  
392 documents are used in multiple contexts, specifically including cases where the message is  
393 transported without an active session, the message can be persisted, and the message is routed  
394 through a number of intermediaries. Such a general context of use suggests that users of this  
395 profile must be concerned with a variety of threats. In particular, no consideration has been given  
396 to the issue of sender or receiver authentication. Therefore, if required, the sender may need to  
397 authenticate the receiver using some authentication technique dependent on the context of use.  
398 Further, the receiver may need to authenticate the sender using some techniques dependent on  
399 the context of use. In the latter case, there is a possibility that the receiver may authenticate the  
400 sender utilizing the attached SAML assertions as a credential together with other information.

### 401 3.1 Holder of Key

402 This profile has one or more authorities issuing assertions that contain  
403 <SubjectConfirmation> elements that essentially say “This assertion is valid if it is presented  
404 with proof that the presenter is the holder of the specified key.”

405 A sender inserts these assertions in a message and the entire message (payload and assertions)  
406 are digitally signed using the specified key—thus providing proof to the receiver that the sender of  
407 the message held the key specified in the assertions.

#### 408 3.1.1 Eavesdropping

409 Eavesdropping continues to be a threat in the same manner as for the SAML SOAP binding, as  
410 discussed in **[SAMLSecure][SAMLSecure]**. The routable nature of SOAP adds the potential for  
411 a large number of steps and actors in the course of a message’s lifetime, which means that the  
412 potential incidences of eavesdropping are increased as the number of possible times a message  
413 is in transit increases.

414 The persistent nature of SOAP messages adds an additional possibility of eavesdropping, in that  
415 stored items can be read from their store.

416 To provide maximum protection from eavesdropping, assertions should be encrypted in such a  
417 way that only the intended audiences can view the material. This removes threats of  
418 eavesdropping in transit, but does not remove risks associated with storage by the receiver or  
419 poor handling of the clear text by the receiver.

#### 420 3.1.2 Replay

421 Binding of assertions to a document opens the door to replay attacks by a malicious user. Issuing  
422 a `HolderOfKey` assertion amounts to “blessing the user’s key” for the purpose of binding  
423 assertions to documents. Once a `HolderOfKey` assertion has been issued to a user, that user  
424 can bind it to any document or documents he chooses.

425 While each assertion is signed, and bound by a second signature into a document, which  
426 prevents a malicious third-party (who has no access to the private key required for the binding  
427 signature) from binding the assertions to arbitrary documents, there is nothing preventing a  
428 malicious **user** (who by definition has access to the private key) from detaching a signed  
429 assertion from the document it arrived in and rebinding it to another document.

430 There are two lines of defense against this type of attack. The first is to consider carefully to  
431 whom you issue `HolderOfKey` assertions (can they be trusted with the right to attach the  
432 assertion to any document?) and what kind of assertions you issue as `HolderOfKey` assertions  
433 (do you want to give up control over the binding of this particular statement to a given

434 document?). The second is a short lifetime on the assertion, to narrow the window of opportunity  
435 for this attack.

436 The capture and resubmission of the entire message (SAML assertions and business payload) is  
437 a threat. One counter-measure is to add information about time, or a sequence number to the  
438 digital signature included in the SOAP header. The receiver can use this information to detect  
439 duplicate messages.

### 440 **3.1.3 Message Insertion**

441 There is no message insertion attack at the level of the `HolderOfKey` format of this profile.

### 442 **3.1.4 Message Deletion**

443 There is no message deletion attack at the level of the `HolderOfKey` format of this profile.

### 444 **3.1.5 Message Modification**

445 The double signing in this profile prevents most message modification attacks. The receiver is  
446 always able to verify the signature on the assertion itself (and should be able to verify that the key  
447 used in that signing act is associated with the putative signer by means of X509v3 certificate,  
448 Certificate Revocation List checks, and so on), which provides a guarantee that the assertion is  
449 unaltered.

450 The receiver can also verify the binding signature to ensure that the message to which the  
451 assertion is attached is unaltered.

452 The profile is secure against modification within the context of an existing trust relationship. The  
453 remaining threats (compromised keys, revoked certificates being used, and so on) are outside the  
454 scope of SAML.

455 Note that the threat of message modification by the holder of the key exists, as discussed in the  
456 discussion of replay attacks in Section 3.1.2.

### 457 **3.1.6 Man-in-the-Middle**

458 An MITM attack is impossible for the `HolderOfKey` format of this profile, since the assertion  
459 specifies the key that must be used for the binding signature, and the assertion itself is protected  
460 against tampering by a signature.

461 The MITM can eavesdrop (if communication is not protected by some confidentiality scheme) but  
462 cannot alter the document without detection.

463 Note that a MITM could alter parts of the document unprotected by the signature (i.e. the other  
464 header elements within the `<ds:Signature>` element). For example, a MITM could remove an  
465 included `<ds:KeyInfo>` block from a `<ds:Signature>` without affecting the validity of the  
466 signature. Theoretically this could force an XKMS lookup or other network call that could be  
467 perverted to malicious ends. However this does not pose a threat for the `HolderOfKey` profile  
468 since (1) the assertion has issuer info (so you know who originated the assertion came) (2) the  
469 signed assertion includes the key for the binding signature.

## 470 **3.2 Sender Vouches**

471 This profile has one or more authorities issuing assertions that contain  
472 `<SubjectConfirmation>` elements that basically say "Trust these if you trust the issuer and  
473 the entity who signed them".

474 A sender collects these assertions and inserts them in a message. The sender then signs over  
475 the entire message, with the signature being used to indicate that these assertions (which are  
476 themselves signed by their issuers) are vouched for by the sender.

### 477 **3.2.1 Eavesdropping**

478 Eavesdropping continues to be a threat in the same manner as for the SAML SOAP binding, as  
479 discussed in **[SAMLSecure]**. The routable nature of SOAP adds the potential for a large number  
480 of steps and actors in the course of a message's lifetime, which means that the potential  
481 incidences of eavesdropping are increased as the number of possible times a message is in  
482 transit increases.

483 The persistent nature of SOAP messages adds an additional possibility of eavesdropping, in that  
484 persisted items can be read from their store.

485 To provide maximum protection from eavesdropping, assertions should be encrypted in such a  
486 way that only the intended audiences can view the material. This removes threats of  
487 eavesdropping in transit, but does not remove risks associated with storage by the receiver or  
488 poor handling of the clear text by the receiver.

### 489 **3.2.2 Replay**

490 The fact that the sender does all binding prevents a variety of replay attacks that reuse the  
491 assertion with different documents. In this case the assertions are directly signed into the  
492 document, so separating them from the document for reuse would not benefit a malicious user.  
493 (i.e. The assertions are only as valid as the binding signature of the sender, so reusing them with  
494 a different key does not pose a risk).

495 Authorities should note that once a "SenderVouches" assertion has been issued, there is no  
496 control over who may use it. Any entity coming into contact with the assertion can separate these  
497 assertions and use them by signing them with their own keys. Consumers of SenderVouches  
498 assertions must, therefore, carefully decide which senders to allow to vouch for what assertions.

499 The capture and resubmission of the entire message (SAML assertions and business payload) is  
500 a threat. One counter-measure is to add information about time, or a sequence number to the  
501 digital signature included in the SOAP header. The receiver can use this information to detect  
502 duplicate messages.

### 503 **3.2.3 Message Insertion**

504 There is no message insertion attack at the level of the `SenderVouches` format of this profile.

### 505 **3.2.4 Message Deletion**

506 There is no message insertion attack at the level of the `SenderVouches` format of this profile.

### 507 **3.2.5 Message Modification**

508 The binding signature should prevent any message modification attacks. Selection of what parts  
509 of the document to sign should be made carefully with the possibility of this attack in mind.

510 Receivers should consider only the portions of the document actually bound by signature to the  
511 assertions as valid with respect to the assertions.

### 512 **3.2.6 Man-in-the-Middle**

513 The requirement for a signature here should prevent MITM attacks. Note that the verifiability of  
514 the signature is key to this step: Not only must a receiver be able to verify that a document was  
515 signed with a key, but he also needs to be able to verify the binding of key to identity. This may  
516 be accomplished by including an X509v3 certificate with the digital signature, which the receiver  
517 verifies by some means (XKMS, OCSP, CRLs) and further maps onto a known identity for the  
518 signer.

519 If this step is skipped, then MITM becomes a possibility: The MITM captures the original  
520 document, alters it, and passes along this new document signed with a key that purports to be  
521 from the original sender (but which is actually held by the MITM).  
522 The MITM can eavesdrop (if communication is not protected by some confidentiality scheme) but  
523 cannot alter the document without detection.

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524 **4 Conformance**

525 TBD

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## Appendix A. Revision History

Rev	Date	By Whom	What
wd-00	2002-06-16	Prateek Mishra	Added use of WS-Security headers to contents of draft-sstc-soap-profile-01.doc.
wd-01	2002-07-23	Prateek Mishra	Added use of <wsse:SecurityTokenReference> to carry SAML assertion id references.
wd-02	2002-08-16	Prateek Mishra	Comments from Allen Rogers, Dipak Chopra. Added use of terminology from WS-Security draft.
wd-03	2002-08-21	Prateek Mishra, Eve Maler	Editorial cleanup. Addition of assertion reference example.
wd-04	2002-09-10	Prateek Mishra	Clarification on authorship and IPR issues relevant to WSS submission

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