



# Web Services Security SAML Token Binding

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**Abstract:**

This document describes how to use Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML) assertions with the [WS-Security](#) specification.

**Status:**

This is an interim draft. Please send comments to the editors.

Committee members should send comments on this specification to [the ~~the~~ ~~mailto:wss@lists.oasis-open.org~~ list](mailto:wss@lists.oasis-open.org). Others should subscribe to and send comments to the [wss-comment@lists.oasis-open.org](mailto:wss-comment@lists.oasis-open.org) list. To subscribe, visit <http://lists.oasis-open.org/ob/adm.pl>.

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37



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## 58 1 Introduction

59 The [WS-Security](#) specification proposes a standard set of [SOAP](#) extensions that can  
60 be used when building secure Web services to implement message level integrity and  
61 confidentiality. This specification describes the use of Security Assertion Markup  
62 Language (SAML) assertions from the <wsse:Security> header block defined by the  
63 ~~with respect to the~~ [WS-Security](#) specification.

### 64 1.1 Goals and Requirements

65 The goal of this specification is to define the use of SAML assertions in the context of  
66 [WS-Security](#) including for the purpose of securing [SOAP](#) message exchanges.

67 The requirements to be satisfied by this specification are listed below.

#### 68 1.1.1 Requirements

69 TBS

70 

#### 71 1.1.2 Non-Goals

72 The following topics are outside the scope of this document:

73  TBS

74

---

## 75 2 Notations and Terminology

76 This section specifies the notations, namespaces, and terminology used in this  
77 specification.

### 78 2.1 Notational Conventions

79 The keywords "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT",  
80 "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this  
81 document are to be interpreted as described in RFC2119.

82 Namespace URIs (of the general form "some-URI") represent some application-  
83 dependent or context-dependent URI as defined in [RFC2396](#).

84 This specification is designed to work with the general [SOAP](#) message structure and  
85 message processing model, and should be applicable to any version of [SOAP](#). The  
86 current SOAP 1.2 namespace URI is used herein to provide detailed examples, but  
87 there is no intention to limit the applicability of this specification to a single version  
88 of [SOAP](#).

89 Readers are presumed to be familiar with the terms in the [Internet Security](#)  
90 [Glossary](#).

### 91 2.2 Namespaces

92 The [XML namespace](#) URIs that MUST be used by implementations of this  
93 specification are as follows (note that different elements in this specification are from  
94 different namespaces):

95 `http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/ws/2002/xx/secext`  
96 `http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/ws/2002/xx/utility`

97 The following namespaces are used in this document:

98

| Prefix | Namespace  |
|--------|--|
| S      | <code>http://www.w3.org/2001/12/soap-envelope</code>       |
| ds     | <code>http://www.w3.org/2000/09/xmldsig#</code>            |
| xenc   | <code>http://www.w3.org/2001/04/xmlenc#</code>             |
| wsse   | <code>http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/ws/2002/xx/secext</code>  |
| wsu    | <code>http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/ws/2002/xx/utility</code> |
| saml   | <code>urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:assertion</code>         |

|       |                                       |
|-------|---------------------------------------|
| samlp | urn: oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:protocol |
|-------|---------------------------------------|

99 **2.3 Terminology**

100 This specification employs the terminology defined in the [WS-Security Core](#)  
101 Specification.

102 Defined below are the basic definitions for additional terminology used in this  
103 specification.

104 [TBS]

---

## 3 Usage

This section describes the specific mechanisms and procedures for the SAML binding of [WS-Security](#).

**Identification:** urn:oasis:names:tc:WSS:1.0:bindings:WSS-SAML-binding

**Contact information:** TBD

**Description:** Given below.

**Updates:** None.

### 3.1 Processing Model

The SAML binding of [WS-Security](#) extends the token-independent processing model defined by the core [WS-Security](#) specification.

When a receiver processes a `<wsse:Security>` header containing [or referencing](#) SAML assertions, it MUST [select, based on its policy, the signatures and assertions that it will process. It is assumed that a receiver's signature selection policy may rely on semantic labeling of <wsse:SecurityTokenReference> elements occurring in the <ds:KeyInfo> elements within the signatures. It is also assumed that the assertions selected for validation and processing will include those referenced from the <ds:KeyInfo> and <ds:SignedInfo> elements of the selected signatures.](#)

[As part of its validation and processing of the selected assertions, the receiver MUST make make](#) an explicit determination of the relationship between the subject of [each each](#) assertion and the sender of the message. Two methods for establishing this correspondence, `holder-of-key` and `sender-vouches` are described below. Senders and receivers implementing the SAML binding of [WS-Security](#) MUST implement the processing necessary to support both of these subject confirmation methods.

### 3.2 Attaching Security Tokens

SAML assertions are attached to SOAP messages using [WS-Security](#) by placing assertion elements [or references to assertions](#) inside a `<wsse:Security>` header. The following example illustrates a SOAP message containing a SAML assertion in a `<wsse:Security>` header.

```
<S:Envelope xmlns:S="...">
  <S:Header>
    <wsse:Security xmlns:wsse="...">
      <saml:Assertion
        MajorVersion="1"
        MinorVersion="0"
        AssertionID="SecurityToken-ef375268"
        Issuer="elliottw1"
        IssueInstant="2002-07-23T11:32:05.6228146-07:00"
        xmlns:saml="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:assertion">
        ...
      </saml:Assertion>
```



146  
147  
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153

```
</wsse:Security>
</S:Header>
<S:Body>
  ...
</S:Body>
</S:Envelope>
```

### 154 3.3 Identifying and Referencing Security Tokens

155 The [WS-Security](#) specification defines the [<wsse:SecurityTokenReference>](#) element  
156 for referencing security tokens. Three forms of token references are defined:

- 157 • [An element reference – a security token specific XML element that contains an](#)  
158 [identifier and perhaps locator of a security token within the message or at some](#)  
159 [external location.](#)
- 160 • [A URI reference – a generic element that conveys in its attributes, the security](#)  
161 [token URI and token type value \(i.e. ValueType\) that define the location and](#)  
162 [perhaps identifier of a security token occurring either within the message or at](#)  
163 [some external location. A URI containing only a fragment identifier is interpreted](#)  
164 [as identifying the corresponding security token within the message in which the](#)  
165 [fragment identifier occurs.](#)
- 166 • [A key identifier reference – a generic element that conveys in its attributes, the](#)  
167 [security token identifier \(i.e. wsu:id\) and token type value \(i.e. ValueType\) that](#)  
168 [identifies a security token with matching wsu:id and ValueType occurring within](#)  
169 [a <wsse:Security> header of the message. Identifier references may only be](#)  
170 [used to reference security tokens that carry matching attributes, which](#)  
171 [approximately restricts their use to Binary Security Tokens attributed as a result](#)  
172 [of their encapsulation in XML.](#)

173 [A URI reference containing a URL may be combined with a token specific element](#)  
174 [reference to yield a location qualified reference.](#)

175 [In The SAML binding of WS-security, a referenced SAML assertion is identified by a](#)  
176 [<saml:AssertionIDReference> occurring either as an element reference or as a](#)  
177 [String value fragment identifier in a URI reference.](#)

#### 178 3.3.1 SAML Assertion Reference Elements

179 [A <wsse:SecurityTokenReference> containing a <saml:AssertionIDReference>](#)  
180 [element containing a SAML assertion identifier may be used to reference a SAML](#)  
181 [assertion occurring within the <wsse:Security> header of the SOAP message in](#)  
182 [which the reference occurs. The following example illustrates the use of a](#)  
183 [<wsse:securityTokenReference> containing a <saml:AssertionIDReference>](#)  
184 [within the <keyInfo> of an XML Signature element to reference the SAML assertion](#)  
185 [\(in the <wsse:Security> header\) that contains the key used to compute the](#)  
186 [signature. ~~wsu:Id attribute as the common mechanism for referencing security~~](#)  
187 [tokens by "Id". ~~Because the <saml:AssertionIDReference> element does not~~](#)  
188 [provide for attribute extensibility, this binding encapsulates](#)  
189 [<saml:AssertionIDReference> elements in the <wsse:SecurityTokenReference>](#)  
190 [element such that the ~~wsu:id~~ attribute of the encapsulating element can be used to](#)

191 identify assertions according to the common WS Security mechanism. When this  
192 element is encountered within a reference, the recipient, if it supports the SAML  
193 binding of WS Security, MUST interpret the contained element as a  
194 `<saml:AssertionIDReference>`.

195 The following example illustrates a message with an XML Signature that references a  
196 SAML assertion token:

```
197 <S:Envelope xmlns:S="...">  
198   <S:Header>  
199     <wsse:Security xmlns:wsse="...">  
200       <saml:Assertion  
201         MajorVersion="1"  
202         MinorVersion="0"  
203         AssertionID="SecurityToken-ef375268"  
204         Issuer="elliottw1"  
205         IssueInstant="2002-07-23T11:32:05.6228146-07:00"  
206         xmlns:saml="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:assertion">  
207         ...  
208       </saml:Assertion>  
209       <ds:Signature xmlns:ds="...">  
210         ...  
211         <ds:KeyInfo>  
212           <wsse:SecurityTokenReference>  
213             <saml:AssertionIDReference  
214               SecurityToken-ef375268  
215             </saml:AssertionIDReference>  
216           </wsse:SecurityTokenReference>  
217         </ds:KeyInfo>  
218       </ds:Signature>  
219       ...  
220     </wsse:Security>  
221   </S:Header>  
222   <S:Body>  
223     ...  
224   </S:Body>  
225 </S:Envelope>  
226
```

### 227 3.3.2 URI References to SAML assertions

228 As depicted in the following example, a URI reference containing only a fragment  
229 identifier consisting of a `<saml:AssertionIDReference>` may be used to reference a  
230 SAML assertion occurring within the `<wsseSecurity>` header of the SOAP message  
231 in which the reference occurs. A URI reference containing an XML path expression  
232 can be used to reference a SAML assertion occurring anywhere within the containing  
233 SOAP message.

```
234 <wsse:SecurityTokenReference>  
235   <wsse:Reference URI="#SecurityToken-ef375268"  
236     ValueType="saml:IDReferenceType">  
237   </wsse:Reference>  
238 </wsse:SecurityTokenReference>
```

239 The following example demonstrates the use of a URI reference in conjunction with a  
240 `<saml:AssertionIDReference>` to define the location of the SAML responder at  
241 which the identified assertion may be obtained.

```
242 <wsse:SecurityTokenReference>  
243   <saml:AssertionIDReference>
```

244  
245  
246  
247  
248

```
    Alice-135246-Assertion  
  </saml:AssertionIDReference>  
  <wsse:Reference URI="http://www.fabrikam123.com/authority"  
  </wsse:Reference>  
</wsse:SecurityTokenReference>
```

### 249 3.3.3 Identifier References to SAML Assertions

250 SAML assertions may not be referenced by identifier references because the  
251 <saml:Assertion> element schema does not include the wsu:id and ValueType  
252 attributes.

## 253 3.4 Proof-of-Possession of Security Tokens

254 As previously stated, the SAML binding of [WS-Security](#) requires that message  
255 senders and receivers support the holder-of-key and sender-vouches methods of  
256 subject confirmation. Additional subject confirmation mechanisms may also be  
257 supported. It is strongly RECOMMENDED that an XML signature be used to establish  
258 the relationship between the message sender and the attached assertions. This is  
259 especially RECOMMENDED whenever the SOAP message exchange is conducted over  
260 an unprotected transport.

261 Any processor of SAML assertions MUST conform to the required validation and  
262 processing rules defined in the SAML specification.

263 The following table enumerates the mandatory subject confirmation methods and  
264 summarizes their associated processing models:

| Mechanism                                     | RECOMMENDED Processing Rules   |
|---|--|
| urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:cm:holder-of-key  | The requestor (the subject) includes an XML Signature that can be verified with the key information in the <u>&lt;saml:ConfirmationMethod&gt; of the SAML assertion referenced by the Signature.</u> <del>referenced security token.</del>       |
| Urn:ietf:rfc:3075                             | The requestor (the subject) includes an XML Signature that can be verified with the key information in the referenced security token.  |
| Urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:cm:sender-vouches | The requestor (the sender, different from the subject) vouches for the verification of the subject. The receiver MUST have an existing trust relationship with the requestor to accept this. It is RECOMMENDED that the requestor sign the token |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | and the message or use a secure transport. |
|--|--|

265 Note that the high level processing model described in the following sections does  
266 not differentiate between message author and message sender as would be  
267 necessary to guard against replay attacks. The high-level processing model also does  
268 not take into account requirements for authentication of receiver by sender, or for  
269 message or assertion confidentiality. These concerns must be addressed by means  
270 other than those described in the high-level processing model.

### 271 3.4.1 Holder-of-key Subject Confirmation Method

272 The following sections describe the holder-of-key method of establishing the  
273 correspondence between a SOAP message sender and the subject of SAML assertions  
274 added to the SOAP message according to the SAML binding of [WS-Security](#).

#### 275 3.4.1.1 Sender

276 A message sender uses the holder-of-key confirmation method to demonstrate that  
277 it is the subject of the assertions in the message. The assertions included in a  
278 message that the sender will confirm by the holder-of-key method MUST include the  
279 following `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element:

```
280 <saml:SubjectConfirmation>  
281   <saml:ConfirmationMethod>  
282   urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:cm:holder-of-key  
283   </saml:ConfirmationMethod>  
284   <ds:KeyInfo>...</ds:KeyInfo>  
285 </saml:SubjectConfirmation>
```

286 The `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element MUST include a `<ds:KeyInfo>` element  
287 that identifies the public or secret key to be used to confirm the identity of the  
288 subject.

289 To satisfy the associated confirmation method processing of the message receiver,  
290 the sender MUST demonstrate knowledge of the key of the subject. The sender MAY  
291 accomplish this by using the key of the subject to sign content within the message  
292 and by including the resulting `<ds:Signature>` element in the `<wsse:Security>`  
293 header.

294 `<ds:Signature>` elements produced for this purpose MUST conform to the  
295 canonicalization and token inclusion rules defined in the core [WS-Security](#)  
296 specification.

297 SAML assertions that contain a holder-of-key `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element  
298 SHOULD contain a `<ds:Signature>` element that protects the integrity of the  
299 confirmation `<ds:KeyInfo>` established by the assertion authority.

300 The canonicalization method used to produce the `<ds:Signature>` elements used  
301 to protect the integrity of SAML assertions MUST support the validation of these  
302 `<ds:Signature>` elements in contexts (such as `<wsse:Security>` header elements)  
303 other than those in which the signatures were calculated.

### 304 3.4.1.2 Receiver

305 Of the SAML assertions it selects for processing, a message receiver ~~A message~~  
306 ~~receiver~~ SHOULD NOT accept assertions containing a holder-of-key  
307 <saml:ConfirmationMethod>, unless the assertions are signed and validated as  
308 described above and the message sender has demonstrated knowledge of the key  
309 identified by the <ds:keyInfo> element of the <saml:SubjectConfirmation>  
310 element. If the receiver determines that the sender has demonstrated knowledge of  
311 a subject confirmation key, then the SAML assertions containing the confirmation key  
312 MAY be attributed to the sender and any elements of the message whose integrity is  
313 protected by the subject confirmation key MAY be considered to have been authored  
314 by the subject.

### 315 3.4.1.3 Example

316 The following example illustrates the use of the holder-of-key subject confirmation  
317 method to establish the correspondence between the SOAP message author and the  
318 subject of the SAML assertions in the <wsse:Security> header:

```
319 <?xml:version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
320 <SOAP-ENV:Envelope
321   xmlns:SOAP-ENV="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/"
322   xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance"
323   xmlns:xsd="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema">
324
325   <SOAP-ENV:Header>
326     <wsse:Security>
327       <saml:Assertion
328         xmlns:saml="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:assertion"
329         MajorVersion="1" MinorVersion="0"
330         AssertionID="2sxJu9g/vvLG9sAN9bKp/8q0NKU="
331         Issuer="www.example.com"
332         IssueInstant="2002-06-19T16:58:33.173Z">
333         <saml:Conditions
334           NotBefore="2002-06-19T16:53:33.173Z"
335           NotOnOrAfter="2002-06-19T17:08:33.173Z"/>
336
337         <saml:AuthenticationStatement
338           AuthenticationMethod="urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:am:password"
339           AuthenticationInstant="2002-06-19T16:57:30.000Z">
340           <saml:Subject>
341             <saml:NameIdentifier
342               NameQualifier="www.example.com"
343               Format="">
344               uid=joe,ou=people,ou=saml-demo,o=example.com
345             </saml:NameIdentifier>
346             <saml:SubjectConfirmation>
347               <saml:ConfirmationMethod>
348                 urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:cm:holder-of-key
349               </saml:ConfirmationMethod>
350               <ds:KeyInfo>
351                 <ds:KeyValue>...</ds:KeyValue>
352               </ds:KeyInfo>
353             </saml:SubjectConfirmation>
354           </saml:Subject>
355         </saml:AuthenticationStatement>
356
357         <saml:AttributeStatement>
358           <saml:Subject>
359             <saml:NameIdentifier
```

```

360         NameQualifier="www.example.com"
361         Format="">
362 uid=joe,ou=people,ou=saml-demo,o=baltimore.com
363     </saml:NameIdentifier>
364     <saml:SubjectConfirmation>
365         <saml:ConfirmationMethod>
366 urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:cm:holder-of-key
367         </saml:ConfirmationMethod>
368         <ds:KeyInfo>
369             <ds:KeyValue>...</ds:KeyValue>
370         </ds:KeyInfo>
371     </saml:SubjectConfirmation>
372 </saml:Subject>
373
374     <saml:Attribute
375         AttributeName="MemberLevel"
376         AttributeNamespace="http://www.oasis-
377 open.org/Catalyst2002/attributes">
378         <saml:AttributeValue>gold</saml:AttributeValue>
379     </saml:Attribute>
380     <saml:Attribute
381         AttributeName="E-mail"
382         AttributeNamespace="http://www.oasis-
383 open.org/Catalyst2002/attributes">
384         <saml:AttributeValue>joe@yahoo.com</saml:AttributeValue>
385     </saml:Attribute>
386 </saml:AttributeStatement>
387 <ds:Signature>...</ds:Signature>
388 </saml:Assertion>
389 <ds:Signature>
390     <ds:SignedInfo>...</ds:SignedInfo>
391     <ds:SignatureValue>
392 HJJWbvqW9E84vJVQkjLLA6nNvBX7mY00TZhwBdFNDElgsCSXZ5Ekw==
393     </ds:SignatureValue>
394 </ds:Signature>
395 </wsse:Security>
396 </SOAP-ENV:Header>
397
398 <SOAP-ENV:Body>
399     <ReportRequest>
400         <TickerSymbol>SUNW</TickerSymbol>
401     </ReportRequest>
402 </SOAP-ENV:Body>
403 </SOAP-ENV:Envelope>

```

## 404 3.4.2 Sender-vouches Subject Confirmation Method

405 The following sections describe the sender-vouches method of establishing the  
406 correspondence between a SOAP message sender and the SAML assertions added to  
407 the SOAP message according to the SAML binding of [WS-Security](#).

### 408 3.4.2.1 Sender

409 A message sender uses the sender-vouches confirmation method to assert that it is  
410 acting on behalf of the subjects of the assertions in the message. The assertions  
411 included in a message that the sender will confirm by the sender-vouches method  
412 MUST include the following `<saml:SubjectConfirmation>` element:

```

413     <saml:SubjectConfirmation>
414         <saml:ConfirmationMethod>

```

415  
416  
417

```
urn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:1.0:cm:sender-vouches
</saml:ConfirmationMethod>
</saml:SubjectConfirmation>
```

418 To satisfy the associated confirmation method processing of the receiver, the sender  
419 MUST use its key to integrity protect the assertions and those elements of the SOAP  
420 message that the sender is vouching for. The sender MAY accomplish this by  
421 including in the corresponding `<wsse:Security>` header a `<ds:Signature>` element  
422 that the sender prepares by using its key to sign the assertions and relevant  
423 message content. As defined by the [XML Signature Specification](#), the sender MAY  
424 identify its key by including a `<ds:KeyInfo>` element within the `<ds:Signature>`  
425 element.

426 A `<ds:Signature>` element produced for this purpose MUST conform to the  
427 canonicalization and token inclusion rules defined in the core [WS-Security](#)  
428 specification.

### 429 **3.4.2.2 Receiver**

430 Of the SAML assertions it selects for processing, a message receiver SHOULD NOT  
431 accept assertions containing a sender-vouches `<saml:ConfirmationMethod>` unless  
432 the assertions and SOAP message content being vouched for by the sender are  
433 integrity protected by a sender who is trusted by the receiver to act on behalf of the  
434 subject of the assertions.

### 435 **3.4.2.3 Example**

436 The following example illustrates a sender's use of the sender-vouches subject  
437 confirmation method with an associated `<ds:Signature>` element to establish its  
438 identity and to assert that it has sent message elements on behalf of the subjects of  
439 the contained assertions:

```
440 <SOAP-ENV:Envelope
441   xmlns:SOAP-ENV="http://schemas.xmlsoap.org/soap/envelope/">
442   <SOAP-ENV:Header
443     xmlns:saml="..."
444     <wsse:Security>
445       <wsse:SecurityTokenReference>
446         <saml:AssertionIDReference>XVB12#$21abc</AssertionIDReference>
447         <wsse:Reference URI="http://www.example.com/SAMLservice"/>
448       </wsse:SecurityTokenReference>
449       <saml:Assertion>...</saml:Assertion>
450       <ds:Signature>...
451         <ds:KeyInfo>...</ds:KeyInfo>
452       </ds:Signature>
453     </wsse:Security>
454   </SOAP-ENV:Header>
455   <SOAP-ENV:Body>
456     ...
457   </SOAP-ENV:Body>
458 </SOAP-ENV:Envelope>
```

## 459 **3.5 Error Codes**

460 It is RECOMMENDED that systems implementing the SAML binding of [WS-Security](#)  
461 respond with the error codes defined in the core [WS-Security](#) specification.

462 Implementations that chose to respond with custom errors, defined in private  
463 namespaces, SHOULD take care not to introduce any security vulnerabilities as a  
464 result of the information returned in their error responses.

465 A receiver that is unable to process the SAML assertions contained in a  
466 <wsse:Security> header SHOULD use one of the fault codes listed in the core WS-  
467 Security specification to report the error. The RECOMMENDED correspondence  
468 between the common assertion processing failures and the error codes defined in the  
469 core [WS-security](#) specification are defined in the following table:

| Assertion Processing Error  | RECOMMENDED Error             |
|---|-------------------------------|
| A referenced SAML assertion could not be retrieved.                                     | Wsse:SecurityTokenUnavailable |
| An assertion contains a <saml:Condition> element that the receiver does not understand. | Wsse:UnsupportedSecurityToken |
| A signature within an assertion or including an assertion is invalid.                   | Wsse:FailedCheck              |
| The issuer of an assertion is not acceptable to the receiver.                           | Wsse:InvalidSecurityToken     |
| The receiver does not understand the extension schema used in a assertion.              | Wsse:UnsupportedSecurityToken |

## 470 **3.6 Threat Model and Countermeasures**

471 This document defines the mechanisms and procedures for securely attaching SAML  
472 assertions to SOAP messages. SOAP messages are used in multiple contexts,  
473 specifically including cases where the message is transported without an active  
474 session, the message is persisted, or the message is routed through a number of  
475 intermediaries. Such a general context of use suggests that users of this binding  
476 must be concerned with a variety of threats. The following sections describe the  
477 vulnerability of the SAML token binding of WS-Security ~~to a variety of threats~~. In  
478 general, the use of SAML assertions with [WS-Security](#) introduces no new threats  
479 beyond those identified for SAML or by the core [WS-Security](#) specification.

480 The following sections provide an overview of the characteristics of the threat model,  
481 and the countermeasures that SHOULD be adopted for each perceived threat.

### 482 **3.6.1 Eavesdropping**

483 Eavesdropping is a threat to the SAML token binding of WS-Security in the same  
484 manner as it is a threat to any network protocol. The routing of SOAP messages  
485 through intermediaries increases the potential incidences of eavesdropping.  
486 Additional opportunities for eavesdropping exist when SOAP messages are persisted.



487 To provide maximum protection from eavesdropping, assertions and sensitive  
488 message content SHOULD be encrypted such that only the intended audiences can  
489 view their content material. This removes threats of eavesdropping in transit, but  
490 MAY not remove risks associated with storage ~~by the receiver~~ or poor handling ~~of the~~  
491 ~~clear text~~ by the receiver.

492 Transport-layer security MAY be used to protect the message and contained SAML  
493 assertions from eavesdropping while in transport, but message content MUST be  
494 encrypted above the transport if it is to be protected from eavesdropping by  
495 intermediaries.

### 496 3.6.2 Replay

497 The reliance on authority signed assertions with a holder~~s~~-of-key subject  
498 confirmation mechanism precludes all but a holder of the key from binding the  
499 assertions to a SOAP message. Although this mechanism affectively restricts  
500 message authorship to the holder of the subject key, it does not preclude the  
501 capture and resubmission of the message by other parties.

502 Assertions that contain a sender-vouches confirmation mechanism introduce another  
503 dimension to replay vulnerability because the assertions impose no restriction on the  
504 senders who may use or reuse the assertions. Any entity coming into contact with  
505 such assertions could use them in a message in which they use their identity to  
506 vouch for the subject of the assertions.

507 Replay attacks can be addressed by using message timestamps and caching, as well  
508 as by using other application-specific tracking mechanisms.

### 509 3.6.3 Message Insertion

510 The SAML token binding of WS-Security is not vulnerable to message insertion  
511 attacks.

### 512 3.6.4 Message Deletion

513 The SAML token binding of WS-Security is not vulnerable to message  
514 deletion~~insertion~~ attacks.

### 515 3.6.5 Message Modification

516 The SAML token binding of WS-Security is protected from message modification if  
517 the relevant message content is signed by the holder of the key or by the vouching  
518 sender. It is strongly RECOMMENDED that all relevant and immutable message  
519 content be signed by the sender. Receivers SHOULD only consider those portions of  
520 the document that are covered by the sender's signature as being subject to the  
521 assertions in the message.

522 SAML assertions appearing in `<wsse:Security>` header elements SHOULD be signed  
523 by their issuing aAuthority source that message receivers can have confidence that  
524 the assertions have not been forged or altered since their issuance. It is strongly  
525 RECOMMENDED that the message sender also sign the `<saml:Assertion>` elements  
526 (either within the token, as part of the message, or both).

527 Transport-layer security MAY be used to protect the message and contained SAML  
528 assertions from modification while in transport, but signatures are required to extend  
529 such protection through intermediaries.

### 530 **3.6.6 Man-in-the-Middle**

531 Assertions with a holder-of-key subject confirmation method are not vulnerable to a  
532 MITM attack. Assertions with a sender-vouches subject confirmation method are  
533 vulnerable to MITM attacks to the degree that the receiver does not have a trusted  
534 binding of key to the vouching sender's identity.

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535 **4 Acknowledgements**

536 This specification was developed as a result of joint work of many individuals from  
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538 TBD

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## Appendix A: Revision History

| Rev       | Date             | What   |
|-----------|------------------|--|
| 01        | 19-Sep-02        | Initial draft produced by extracting SAML related content from [XML token] |
| 02        | 23-Sep-02        | Merged in content from SS TC submission                                    |
| <u>03</u> | <u>18-Nov-02</u> | <u>Resolved issues raised by TC</u>  |
|           |                  |  |

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