

Frequently Asked Questions

Trust Safety Analytics and Audit Services Transition

The Law Society of Alberta (the Law Society) is transitioning its analytics and audit services to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). This will impact how law firms upload their electronic data and the Accountant's Report as part of their Trust Safety Annual filings.

We are committed to improving the way we support Responsible Lawyers by integrating e-business solutions to facilitate compliance with Trust Safety requirements. This will enable us to quickly identify opportunities to provide proactive support to Responsible Lawyers, while at the same time, identifying emerging risks.

Summary of Privacy Impact Assessment hosted by PwC

Based on the Privacy Impact Assessment conducted, the Privacy Officer concluded that there was minimal risk in adopting the new Electronic Trust Transfer Review (ETTR) project. Minimal risk in this context refers to risk to the security of audit information. This includes factors such as where the information is stored, who has access to the information, and the security in place for our information if it is stored by a third party.

The Privacy Officer deemed that although the information is stored on PWC Connect servers, there are substantial security measures in place to protect audit information. Similarly, the contractors involved in the ETTR program from PWC have taken LSA Privacy training and have agreed to safeguard the confidentiality of audit and analytics information.

Data Security

PwC has thorough system security and data handling procedures designed to prevent unauthorized access to client confidential information, including unauthorized access by government entities. Their staff and contractors are regularly trained on these procedures to ensure these procedures are adhered to at all levels. Unauthorized breach of data is reported, investigated and corrective actions are taken. In addition unauthorized access affecting data held on behalf of LSA and its members will be reported to LSA.

1. Why does the Law Society keep making changes to the Trust Safety Program?

Our processes are constantly exposed to changes in regulation and risk. These changes impact the effectiveness of our Trust Safety Program, so continually making enhancements allows us to identify risk sooner.

We are making changes to our analytics and audit services this year to drive efficiency in our processes and to ensure sustainable program costs over time.

2. Why is the Law Society changing service providers for its analytics and audit services?

In 2015, we outsourced components of the Trust Safety Program including data analytics and audit services to an external service provider. The decision included a commitment to review the service within two years to ensure:

- services remain aligned with our needs and the profession;
- rates are competitive to ensure sustainable program costs over time; and

- we understand the pros and cons of outsourcing the audit function versus bringing it in-house.

We have opted to stay with an outsourced solution for both the analytics and audit services, but we selected a new service provider, PwC.

3. Why did the Law Society select PwC for its data analytics and audit services?

We selected PwC to provide analytics and audit services because they brought a proven technical solution with a team of local experts. We also have an established working relationship with PwC as they currently perform the external audit.

4. How does this transition to PwC impact my law firm?

The transition of the analytics and audit services to PwC will see some minor process changes in how the electronic data upload and Accountant's Report are submitted to the Law Society as part of the Trust Safety Annual Filings (Annual Filings).

5. How does this transition to PwC impact the Annual Filings or the designated filing date?

The transition to PwC does not impact the designated filing date. Law firms are required to submit their Annual Filings by March 31, 2019.

You will see minor process changes in how the electronic data upload and Accountant's Report are submitted to the Law Society.

- The Accountant's Report will now be submitted through the Connect Tool -- not through the Trust Safety email.
- The electronic data upload will now be submitted using the Connect Tool -- not the current file transfer site Accellion.
 - You will also have more choices for trust accounting software to generate your trust accounting data.
 - There are currently four approved trust accounting software vendors: PCLaw, ESILaw, Cosmolex and Clio. By December 31, 2018 four additional trust accounting software vendors will be approved: BriefLegal, Acumin, Elite and Aderant.
 - You can use any of the eight approved vendors to generate your electronic data.

6. What isn't changing for the Annual Filings?

The Law Firm Self Report is still submitted online through the Lawyer Portal.

7. Does this transition impact my law firm if we don't do the electronic data upload as part of the Annual Filings?

If your law firm does not submit your trust accounting data electronically, you will see a minor change in how you submit your Accountant's Report.

The Accountant's Report will now be submitted through the Connect Tool -- not through the Trust Safety email.

8. Are law firms going to be required to do the electronic data upload instead of the Accountant's Report as part of this transition?

Currently, 80 per cent of law firms submit their data electronically and our goal is to have all law firms submitting their data electronically by 2022.

We are committed to working with law firms as we transition our analytics and audit services to PwC. Trust Safety staff is available to answer questions and provide any information required to help you transition to the new filing Tool or to help you submit your trust accounting data electronically.

We are here to help. Please email Trust.Safety@lawsociety.ab.ca or call 403-228-5632 if you have any questions.

9. Do I have to use one of the four approved trust accounting software vendors or can I use other software to prepare my electronic data upload?

By December 31, 2018 four additional trust accounting software vendors will be approved: BriefLegal, Acumin, Elite and Aderant.

Law firms can use any of the eight approved trust accounting software vendors to generate their trust accounting data.

10. Will there be a transition period to start using the Connect Tool to upload my electronic data?

The PwC Connect Tool will be available on January 1, 2019 to submit your electronic data upload and Accountant's Report.

All law firms must use the Connect Tool for their 2019 Annual Filings.

11. Can I still submit my electronic data upload using the Accellion file sharing site?

No. We will no longer accept data through the Accellion file sharing site.

12. Will Responsible Lawyers receive training on the new PwC Connect Tool?

Yes. Training for Responsible Lawyers will be provided the week of December 3, 2018 with additional sessions planned for January 2019. More details to follow.

Online training will also be offered including an extensive help function, FAQ and "How To" materials. A user guide will also be made available on the Law Society website.

We are committed to working with law firms as we transition our analytics and audit services to PwC. Trust Safety staff is available to answer questions and provide any information you may need. Please email Trust.Safety@lawsociety.ab.ca or call 403-228-5632 if you have any questions.

13. Can the Law Society guarantee my data will be protected using the Connect Tool?

Proactive data management and protection plays an important role in upholding PwC's reputation and building trust with clients.

The PwC global network has developed the Network Data Protection Program (NDPP), which serves as a common set of standards across the network to address matters of data governance, protection and appropriate use of personal data from our people, clients, vendors and other stakeholders.

For more detailed information, read the PwC Data Handling and Security FAQ.

14. How will PwC handle and protect the electronic data?

Data uploaded via the Connect Tool will temporarily be located on PwC Servers in the United States. These servers are under the jurisdiction of PwC Global IT.

Once received, data will be imported to PwC Cloud Servers residing in Canada where all validation, analysis and review will occur. The data on the US servers will then be purged.

For more detailed information, read the PwC Data Handling and Security FAQ.