

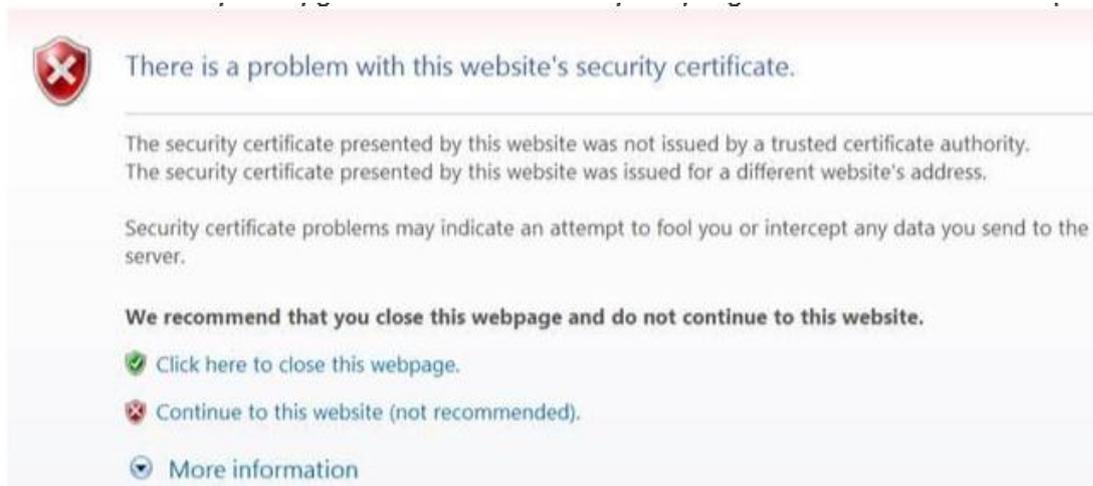
SECURITY CERTIFICATES

On occasion, and it most often happens when someone goes to a secure site, one with an address that begins **https://** rather than **http://**, someone may get a notice like this when they go to a website using Firefox:



The image shows a Firefox security warning dialog box with a yellow border and a close button (X) in the top right corner. On the left is a yellow shield icon with a black figure holding a document. The main text reads: "This Connection is Untrusted". Below this, it says: "You have asked Firefox to connect securely to **insidemit-apps.mit.edu**, but we can't confirm that your connection is secure." It then explains: "Normally, when you try to connect securely, sites will present trusted identification to prove that you are going to the right place. However, this site's identity can't be verified." Under the heading "What Should I Do?", it states: "If you usually connect to this site without problems, this error could mean that someone is trying to impersonate the site, and you shouldn't continue." There is a button labeled "Get me out of here!". At the bottom, there are two expandable sections: "▶ Technical Details" and "▶ I Understand the Risks".

Internet Explorer, on the other hand, sometimes pops up with a notice like this:



The image shows an Internet Explorer security warning dialog box with a light pink header and a white body. On the left is a red shield icon with a white 'X'. The main text reads: "There is a problem with this website's security certificate." Below this, it says: "The security certificate presented by this website was not issued by a trusted certificate authority. The security certificate presented by this website was issued for a different website's address." It then explains: "Security certificate problems may indicate an attempt to fool you or intercept any data you send to the server." Under the heading "We recommend that you close this webpage and do not continue to this website.", there are three options: a green checkmark icon followed by "Click here to close this webpage.", a red 'X' icon followed by "Continue to this website (not recommended).", and a blue shield icon followed by "More information".

Technical stuff:

This type of website sends info back and forth over port 443, which is set up to allow secure transmissions. When your browser sees this port, it knows to request a special certificate from the site proving they are secure. If they send the certificate, and your browser trusts it, it then sends your info in an encrypted form and the server decodes it on its end. Think of port 443 as a highway with a secure checkpoint at each end.

There are a lot of reasons that you get one of those warnings at a secure site when the site is perfectly safe to go to:

- Sometimes a new version of Internet Explorer or Firefox will come out and see almost every site as untrusted, and the browser's creators need to fix the browser so it doesn't give false warnings.
- Security certificates are time-sensitive. If your computer clock is off (the date/time is later than the expiry date of the web server's SSL certificate), the certificate timestamp will not register as correct by browser and it will suspect there is a problem with the certificate.
- Security certificates need to be updated from time to time or they expire. While secure sites regularly renew their security certificates, it is possible that one will expire before the renewal goes through. (Sort of like when your utility company mails out a bill saying you owe money even though you already sent the payment, but they haven't received or processed the payment yet.)
- If you encounter a certificate error on a website that you have visited before without errors, it is also possible that the error is in the way the address was typed. For example, if you typed <https://example.com> try typing it as <https://www.example.com> to see if that gets rid of the certificate error.

But the bottom line is this:

If you know the website, if it is one that you trust, you can go forward. Both <https://www.esotech.com.au/> and <https://www.alabe.com> can be trusted.

Go ahead and click



That should take you to the website.

On occasion, especially with Firefox, you may have to go through a few more steps

such as clicking  and 

before you can finally get to the webpage.

If you are not sure about the website...if perhaps it is one you found doing a web search, or one you received a link for in an email from an acquaintance, you would probably be better off not going to the site.

Click



The website 'may'be OK but you have no way of knowing for sure.

It is better to be safe than sorry.