
Keys and Passwords



Handling Long-Term Keys

- Where do cryptographic keys come from?
- How should they be handled?
- What are the risks?
- As always, there are tradeoffs

Public/Private Keys

- Who generates the private key for a certificate?
- The server may have better random number generators
- Only the client needs the key
- (Does the corporation need a copy of the key?)
- If the server generates the key, how does it get to the client securely?
- (How does the public key get to the CA securely?)

Secret Keys

- Who generates secret keys?
- The problem is harder — both parties need to know them
- Again, how are they communicated securely?

Communication Options

- Channel authenticated by other means
- Public-key protected channel
- Hard-wired contact
- Out-of-band communications
- Note: process matters!

Out-of-Band Communications

- Telephone
- SMS text message
- Postal mail

What are the Enemy's Powers?

- Steal letters from a mailbox?
- Fake CallerID with an Asterisk PBX?
- Planting malware on the phone?
- Burglary, bribery, blackmail?

Tamper Resistance

- Keys are safer in tamper-resistant containers — they can't be stolen
- See “the three Bs” above
- Note well: tamper-*resistant*, not tamper-*proof*
- The availability of tamper-resistant hardware changes the tradeoffs

Online vs. Offline

- Does the key generator need to be online?
- A CA can be offline, and accept public keys via, say, CD
- That may be riskier than having it generate the private key — what if there's a buffer overflow in the read routine?
- (But the CA has to read other things, like username)
- For secret keys, the server can't be offline; rather, some copy of the key has to be online, to use it

No Perfect Answers!

- There are always tradeoffs
- The right answer in one situation may be the wrong answer in another
- Must evaluate the risks and the benefits of each alternative
- Caution: assume that the enemy's powers will grow

Putting it All Together

- Let's look at some relatively simple privileged programs
- How do they combine the different mechanisms we've seen?
- What are the threats? The defenses?

The “Passwd” Command

- Permits users to change their own passwords
- In other words, controls system access
- Very security-sensitive!
- How does it work?

Necessary Files

- `/etc/passwd` — must be world-readable, for historical reasons
 - 👉 Maps numeric UID to/from username
- Historical format:

```
root:8.KxUJ8mGHCwq:0:0:Root:/root:/bin/sh
```
- Fields: username, hashed password, numeric uid, numeric gid, name, home directory, shell
- Numeric uid/gid is what is stored for files
- Password is two bytes of salt, 11 bytes of “encryption” output
- Encoded in base 64 format: A-Za-z0-9./

Password Refresher

- Stored in irreversibly hashed form
- Classic scheme used encryption algorithm in odd way
- Use “salt” to prevent the same password from hashing to the same value on different machines, or for different users
- Salt makes dictionary of precomputed hashed passwords much more expensive

Storing the Hashed Password

- Better not make it world-readable
- Store in a *shadow password* file
- That file can be read-protected

File Permissions

```
$ ls -l /etc/passwd /etc/shadow
-rw-r--r--  1 root  root  671 Oct  3 10:42 /etc/passwd
-r-----  1 root  root  312 Oct  3 10:42 /etc/shadow
```

Must Be Owned by Root!

- Ownership of that file is equivalent to root permissions
- Anyone who can rewrite it can give themselves root permissions
- Cannot use lesser permissions
- Note: adding a line to that file (often with a text editor) is the first step in adding a user login to the system

Implications of the Numeric UID/GUID

- Assigning a UID to a username grants access to that UID's files
- In other words, anyone with write permission on `/etc/passwd` has access to all files on the system
- Consequence: even if we changed the kernel so that root didn't have direct access to all files, this mechanism provides indirect access to all files
- Conclusion: Cannot give root control over UID assignment on secure systems

What Else Shouldn't Root Be Able to Change?

- The user's password!
- Attack: change the user's password to something you know
- Windows XP does not give Administrator either of these powers

The Passwd Command

- Clearly, must be setUID to root
- Must be carefully written. . .

Authenticating the User

- Pwd program has real UID
- Demand old password — why?
- ☞ Guard against someone doing permanent damage with minimal access
- Root can change other user's passwords

Where Does the Salt Come From?

- Passwd command generates random number
- Need this be true-random?
- No — “probably different” will suffice.
- Seed ordinary pseudo-random number generator with time and PID

Restricting Access

- Suppose only a few people were allowed to change their own passwords
- Take away other-execute permission; put those people in the same group as “passwd”

Front Ends

- What about the help desk, for forgotten passwords?
- Have a setUID root front end that invokes passwd
- Validate: make sure they can only change certain users' passwords
- Log it! (Much more later in the semester on logging)

Making a Temporary Copy

- Must copy password file to temporary location and back to change a password
- Watch out for race condition attacks!
- Actual solution: put temporary file in `/etc` instead of `/tmp`; avoid whole problem
- Secondary benefit: use temporary file as lock file, and as recovery location in case of crash

Update in Place

- Password changes could overwrite the file in place
- Doesn't work for use add/delete or name change
- Still need locking

Passwords on the Command Line?

- Bad idea — `ps` shows it
- Bad idea — may be in shell history file

```
$ history 12
12      date
13      man setuid
14      ls -l `tty`
```

- Your terminal isn't readable by others:

```
$ ls -l `tty`
crw--w---- 1 smb tty 136, 5 Oct 26 14:24 /dev/pts/5
```

Changing Your Name

- Chsh is like passwd, but it lets you change other fields
- Ordinary users can change shell and human-readable name; root can change other fields
- *Much* more dangerous than passwd

Input Filtering

- What if user supplies new shell or name with embedded colons?
Embedded newlines? Both?
- Could create fake entries!
- Must filter for such things

Features Used

- Access control
- Locking/race prevention
- Authentication
- Privilege (setUID)
- Filtering

Security Analysis: Internet Thermostats

- I recently decided to investigate Internet thermostats
- Control and monitor my house temperature remotely
- Are there security risks?

One Popular Brand

- Thermostats have built-in web servers
- Simplest mode: direct connection to thermostat
- Alternate mode: thermostat and user connect to company's web site; company can generate alert emails

What's at Risk?

- Turning off someone's heat in the middle of winter?
- Turning on the heat in the summer?
- Run heat and air conditioning simultaneously?

Local Management

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window titled "Thermostat Hallway - Status & Control - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows the URL "http://198.168.1.50:8090/". The page content is organized into several sections:

- NT20e**: A sidebar with "STATUS" and "LOGIN" buttons.
- Thermostat Status**: A yellow header bar with "Hallway" on the right.
- Temperature**: A sub-section with the date and time "Sunday, May 20, 2007 7:04:59 AM". It contains a table with the following data:

Zone Temperature	70.4°F
Local	70.4°F
Override	
Cool Setting	78.0°F
Heat Setting	68.0°F
Hold Mode	Off
- Schedule Settings**: A sub-section with a table:

Day Class / Period	In / Morn
Cool	78.0°F
Heat	68.0°F
- HVAC Settings**: A sub-section with a table:

HVAC State	Off
HVAC Mode	Auto
Fan State	Off
Fan Mode	Auto
- Alarm Status**: A sub-section with a table:

Low Temperature	OK
High Temperature	OK
Filter change	OK

A "Refresh" button is located at the bottom of the Alarm Status table.

Local Problems

- No https — people can eavesdrop
- Uses “Basic Authentication”:
 - “The most serious flaw in Basic authentication is that it results in the essentially cleartext transmission of the user’s password over the physical network....
 - “Because Basic authentication involves the cleartext transmission of passwords it SHOULD NOT be used (without enhancements) to protect sensitive or valuable information.”
- No read-only mode

Remote Management

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the Proliphix Remote Management interface. The address bar shows the URL: <https://access.proliphix.com/Frame.php?SerialNo=83-0F-8A-A78Proxy=1>. The page title is "Remote Management" and the Proliphix logo is visible. The interface is divided into a left sidebar with navigation options and a main content area.

NT20

Thermostat Status Kitchen

Wednesday, November 09, 2005 11:31:57 AM

Temperature		
Zone Temperature	70.0°F	
Local	70.0°F	
Override		
Cool Setting	78.0°F	78 °F
Heat Setting	68.0°F	68 °F
Hold Mode	Off	Off

Schedule Settings

Day Class / Period	Out / Day
Cool	78.0°F
Heat	68.0°F

HVAC Settings

HVAC State	Off	
HVAC Mode	Auto	Auto
Fan Mode	Auto	Auto

Alarm Status

Low Temperature	OK
High Temperature	OK
Filter change	OK

Buttons: Refresh, Submit

Remote Problems

- Https — but only to the server
- Unencrypted traffic from the server to the thermostats
- (The words “security” and “encryption” are not mentioned in the API manual...)
- Passwords are sent in the clear across the Internet
- Passwords are stored in bulk on the server

Privacy Issues

- Energy consumption patterns
- Al Gore's thermostat setting? Japanese office thermostat settings?
- Vacation schedules (burglary risk?)

Defenses

- Can't touch thermostat software
- Add layering — access controls on top of built-in controls
- Use crypto tunnels
- Filter setting change requests

Last-Ditch Defenses

- Add a low-limit heat switch in parallel
- Add a high-limit heat switch in series
- These are hardware devices, not software
- Protect against bugs
- What if they fail?
- Independent failure modes; protect against each other

How to Analyze This?

- Hard to *know* all the threats
- Approach: see what is made available, and ask who might want it
- Reason by analogy and effect
- Check the “gold standard” (Au): **A**uthentication, **A**uthorization, **A**udit