

Re: Confidentiality of information in my system ..

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- *From:* "Patrick Keenan" <test@xxxxxxx>
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"Minto" <axmukher@xxxxxxxx> wrote in message
<news:1160659359.772916.237030@xx>

I have been hearing in the news that Windows XP is having a few flaws which Microsoft is trying to patch up.

It's not news, but all large software, including all operating system software, has flaws. What's probably more important is how the people administering the systems secure them (or don't). This is why

How do I know that my system has not been compromised already? I am storing all sorts of confidential data like credit card numbers and passwords in my system, so naturally I am very concerned. Also, I have other confidential information that I would not like to share with others.

There's a saying that the only secure computers are those not connected to networks. As well, anyone who can get physical access to your machine can be assumed to be able to take any data from it.

If you have a concern for security, educate yourself (there is a lot of information, much highly technical, on this topic), and if you are uncertain, move (not copy) that data to media that is not shared, does not always have to be attached to the PC (like on CD/RW or an external drive you can disconnect) and that others don't have physical access to. Turn off any un-needed file sharing and install a NAT router. And change your passwords regularly.

A word regarding XP Pro encryption: this is effective, but is tied to the user account credentials. Once you're in the account, the data is unencrypted. And should the account be changed from outside, such as a lost password being reset by the administrator, if the credentials weren't exported and verified, the data is permanently lost.

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Is there any way to confirm that my system has not been already compromised?

Pretty much only by watching for misuse of your information.

If you think there is the remotest chance that this has happened, immediately change all the passwords and credit card numbers.

Doing so will not only prevent misuse by instantly invalidating all the old information, but will trigger detection activities when and if the old information is used. Just be sure it isn't *you* that accidentally uses the old information – this can be rather embarrassing.

Regularly changing passwords is a very basic security measure. Many people do not do this.

I have anti-virus and firewall installed, but maybe they are not good enough??

They help, but do not absolve you of responsibility for your data. Do not consider them as complete or impenetrable security solutions.

HTH
-pk