

Internet Engineering Task Force
Internet-Draft
Updates: [RFC5931](#) (if approved)
Intended status: Informational
Expires: February 25, 2017

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August 24, 2016

Adding Support for Salted Password Databases to EAP-pwd
draft-harkins-salted-eap-pwd-06

Abstract

EAP-pwd is an EAP method that uses a shared password for authentication using a technique that is resistant to dictionary attack. It included support for raw keys and [RFC2751](#)-style double hashing of a password but did not include support for salted passwords. There are many existing databases of salted passwords and it is desirable to allow their use with EAP-pwd.

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August 2016

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[1. Introduction](#)

[1.1. Background](#)

Databases of stored passwords present an attractive target for attack-- get access to the database, learn the passwords. To confound such attacks a random "salt" is hashed with the password and the resulting digest is stored, along with the salt, instead of the raw password. This has the effect of randomizing the password so if two distinct users have chosen the same password the stored, and salted, password will be different. It also requires an adversary who has compromised the security of the stored database to launch a dictionary attack per entry to recover passwords.

The popularity of password salting means there are a large number of such databases deployed and EAP-pwd needs to be able to support them. EAP-pwd imposes an additional security requirement on a database of salted passwords that otherwise would not exist, see [Section 5](#).

[1.2. Keyword Definition](#)

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [RFC 2119](#) [[RFC2119](#)].

[2.](#) Salted Passwords in EAP-pwd

[2.1.](#) Password Pre-Processing

EAP-pwd is based on the "dragonfly" password-authenticated key exchange (PAKE)-- see [[RFC7664](#)]. This is a balanced PAKE and requires that each party to the protocol obtain an identical representation of a processed password (see [Section 5](#)). Salting of a password is therefore treated as an additional password pre-processing technique of EAP-pwd. The salt and digest to use is conveyed to the peer by the server and the password is processed prior to fixing the password element (see [Section 2.8.3 of \[RFC5931\]](#)).

This memo defines eight (8) new password pre-processing techniques for EAP-pwd:

- o TBD1: a random salt with SHA-1 ([\[SHS\]](#))
- o TBD2: a random salt with SHA-256 ([\[SHS\]](#))
- o TBD3: a random salt with SHA-512 ([\[SHS\]](#))
- o TBD4: UNIX crypt() ([\[CRY\]](#))
- o TBD5: OpaqueString and a random salt with SHA-1 ([\[SHS\]](#))
- o TBD6: OpaqueString and a random salt with SHA-256 ([\[SHS\]](#))
- o TBD7: OpaqueString and a random salt with SHA-512 ([\[SHS\]](#))
- o TBD8: OpaqueString and a UNIX crypt() ([\[CRY\]](#))

When passing salt, the size of the salt SHOULD be at least as long as the message digest of the hash algorithm used. There is no guarantee that deployed salted databases have followed this rule, and in the

interest of interoperability, an EAP peer SHOULD NOT abort an EAP-pwd exchange if the length of the salt conveyed during the exchange is less than the message digest of the indicated hash algorithm.

When performing one of TBD5-TBD8 the password SHALL be a UTF-8 string and SHALL be pre-processed by applying the Preparation and Enforcement steps of the OpaqueString profile in [[RFC7613](#)] to the password. The output of OpaqueString, also a UTF-8 string, becomes the EAP-pwd password and SHALL be hashed with the indicated algorithm.

[2.2.](#) The Salting of a Password

For both parties to derive the same salted password there needs to be a canonical method of salting a password. When using EAP-pwd, a password SHALL be salted by hashing the password followed by the salt using the designated hash function:

```
salted-password = Hash(password | salt)
```

The server stores the salted-password, and the salt, in its database and the client derives the salted-password on-the-fly.

[2.3.](#) Using UNIX crypt

Different algorithms are supported with the UNIX crypt() function. The particular algorithm used is indicated by prepending an encoding of "setting" to the passed salt. The specific algorithm used is opaque to EAP-pwd as the entire salt, including the encoded "setting", is passed as an opaque string for interpretation by crypt(). The salted password used for EAP-pwd SHALL be the output of crypt():

```
salted-password = crypt(password, salt)
```

The server stores the salted-password, and the encoded algorithm plus salt, in its database and the client derives the salted-password on-the-fly.

[2.4.](#) Protocol Modifications

the immediate effect of such a compromise would be the compromised server, the per-user salt would still prevent the adversary from recovering the password, barring a successful dictionary attack, to use for other purposes.

Salted password databases used with EAP-pwd MUST be afforded the same level of protection as databases of plaintext passwords.

EAP-pwd sends the salt in the clear. If EAP-pwd is not tunneled in another, encrypting, EAP method, an adversary that can observe traffic from server to authenticator or from authenticator to client would learn the salt used for a particular user. While knowledge of a salt by an adversary may be of a somewhat dubious nature (pre-image resistance of the hash function used will protect the client's password and, as noted above, the database of salted passwords must still be protected from disclosure), it does represent potential additional meta-data in the hands of a untrusted third party.

[6.](#) References

[6.1.](#) Normative References

- [CRY] "crypt(3) man page",
<<http://man7.org/linux/man-pages/man3/crypt.3.html>>.
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