

# from the security soapbox

Passwords are the weakest link in the security chain. If you haven't changed your password within the last four or five weeks, consider changing it soon. People on the network who choose poor passwords create invitations for breaks in security.

## what makes a good password

A good password is easy for you to remember and hard for someone else to guess. A good password also:

- Contains at least six characters
- Uses a mix of lowercase and uppercase letters
- Contains digits and punctuation marks, including shifted numbers
- Can't be found in an ordinary dictionary
- Is not someone's name.

Your password can be as long as you want, but only the first eight characters matter. Unfortunately, some parts of our system don't handle eight-bit characters-such as Ý (Alt-e e)-well enough to permit their use in passwords. Rats.

## **what makes a bad password**

If your password is easy to guess, an intruder can more easily break into your network. It's easy to guess one based on very common ways to invent a password, such as:

- The user's login name, forward or backward
- The user's real name, forward or backward
- The user's significant other's name, forward or backward
- Almost all proper nouns.

Common words in the dictionary are also easy to guess. Imagine having a program, not a person, try all the common password possibilities. Imagine this program running all the time.

## **how to change your password**

Take the time to think of a good password. Changing your password is easy: In the Preferences application, click the lock icon, enter your old password, enter your new password, and then enter the new password a second time to verify it. That's it.

A47\_PasswordPnl.tiff →

And now we'll get down off the soapbox.