IEClean Information

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IEClean Information
"Why is there an IEClean program?"

   IEClean has its roots in a program called NSClean which was written for the popular Netscape web browser. As a result of the success of the NSClean product and the fact that Internet Explorer does the same things, IEClean has recently come into existence to cover both popular web browsers.

   The author wishes to make it absolutely clear that he has no axe to grind with Netscape Communications Corporation and its fine "Netscape Navigator product." The author uses it regularly to access World Wide Web sites and newsgroups. In the author's opinion no finer browser software exists.

   The author created NSClean in order to address the concerns of other users of Netscape who discovered that files and information were retained in their computer after leaving Netscape. These files contained data of all of their activities while surfing the net. This caused many of them great distress. As more friends became aware of the author's knowledge of the inner workings of Netscape and the author's ability to purge information from Netscape, the author felt it useful to create the NSClean software to automate these tasks as more people came looking for file surgery on their computers.

   In early versions of the Netscape browser, Netscape provided a simple mechanism called "bookmarks" which allowed you to mark a new location you visited so you could easily return there in the future. Information stored in the BOOKMARK file could be easily edited and culled using a standard text editor program, even the Windows Notepad applet. The newer versions of Netscape create Bookmark files that cannot be edited or changed. Netscape actually warns users not to edit the BOOKMARK file!

   Version 2.0 (Navigator) and later versions added several new features including the URL memory window. This window is on the main Netscape screen and shows the last ten sites you visited, including those you chose NOT to bookmark. The URL memory window allows you to recall a site when the "back" button did not return you to a previous site. However this information is retained when you exit Netscape and stored in a file.

   Imagine that you visited a site that you really didn't want anyone else to know you ended up at. It would still be listed in the system and would be available to snoopers who knew where to look for such information or worse, children in the house who might find inappropriate locations from this listing. Obviously there are circumstances where a user might not want this information to be retained. Netscape does not provide any means to delete this information. NSClean does.

   Newer versions of Netscape also maintain a list of EVERYTHING you have done, everything you have seen, the locations, filenames and pictures viewed or downloaded in what Netscape calls its "history file." Since Netscape cannot use this history file for any means of returning to a site visited previously, there is no logical reason for this data to be kept. The history file continues to grow over time even though the user cannot make use of the information contained within. There is also an amount of encrypted data within this file which seems to serve no purpose that can be determined. A paranoid would most certainly look upon this file as some sort of Big Brother database for nefarious purposes. The author makes no judgement other than not liking unknown data on his machine and suspects others would agree.

   Netscape also maintains a database containing a listing of all newsgroups read with specific message numbers recorded in it. This function does appear to have a legitimate use,

that of preventing you from rereading articles you've seen before. However, like the other files, it records a listing of the newsgroups you read including those that might be (ahem) "unsavory" in the eyes of snoopers who might look over your computer's contents. The author feels there are probably some Netscape users who would rather not have certain newsgroups to be potentially revealed to others. Netscape does not provide a means of cleaning this information out either.

Netscape also provides a "cache" system which stores all of the screens and pictures you've seen on the world wide web. Oddly, the information stored in this "cache" is only useful in quickly redrawing screens you've seen before only during the current session. If you exit Netscape, or Netscape crashes forcing you to run it again, all of this information which is still stored on your machine is of no use at all. Thus there is really no reason to keep the cache once you have exited Netscape. The CACHE directory which contains all these files can get huge indeed over time and can waste many megabytes of hard disk space for no good reason. Netscape does provide a means of eliminating the cache files after a set number of days, but now and then you might want to clear out the clutter at will.

Recently, "bugs" in Netscape were widely publicized in the media proclaiming significant security breaches. Netscape assured anxious users that the security issues would be fixed. Most notable was one whereby a web server at a remote location could poll Netscape and extract your email name and location without your knowledge or permission. This flaw turned out to be intrinsic in the "Java" script language provided with Netscape to allow viewing of animated graphics on web pages. Others opined that more information than just the user's email address could be gotten via this breach.

Although the "security breach" was not Netscape's fault (it was a bug in the Java language made by Sun Microsystems), paranoids believed that since Netscape gave away copies of their client software and sells their Web Server software at a stiff price, there is possibly an incentive for Netscape to provide server customers a means to better track their sites and determine who visits and what they do while at an internet web site.

Netscape also provides a number of encryption engines which could conceivably be used to hide a download of information on personal internet habits to a Netscape-based web host. The author believes that all of these systems are likely to be inoccuous but hey, paranoids have enemies too. Combining all of these concerns with the simple truth that those who provide content truly want to have access to as much information as possible about those who visit their sites, it seems a means of controlling personal confidential information on one's computer would serve to give an internet user greater safety and security and prevent the possibility of   information being obtained about the user and their habits would be a good idea.

In fact the inspiration to write this software was based on a workplace situation where several network users who websurfed during their lunch hour were concerned that coworkers who maintain their computers might discover that they were visiting sites that might be frowned upon by management.

Enter NSClean. NSClean is designed to search through your Netscape setup and delete the data you decide you want to delete. NSClean removes the information giving you a clean slate any time you use it without harming your Netscape setup or any of the files you need. By cleaning out this unnecessary data, NSClean also frees up valuable hard disk space that would otherwise be wasted. NSClean was designed to be used ONLY with Netscape. IEClean (this product) was designed to give similar functionality with Microsoft's "Internet Explorer" 16 bit 2.0 browser.

IEClean allows you to select which information you wish to have safely deleted. If you are

concerned that your employer, friends, family or spies in black helicopters might be able to find out what you've been doing (especially on company time), IEClean will purge the incriminating information from the bowels of Internet Explorer's file system. By selecting which information you want automatically killed using a simple checkbox menu, IEClean will purge ONLY those areas that are of concern to you while preserving other information as you desire.

"Netscape" is a registered trademark of Netscape Communications Corporation.

"Internet Explorer" and "Windows" are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation.

"Java" is a registered trademark of Sun Microsystems, Inc.

IEClean Information
"Using IEClean"

    PLEASE read the checklist information carefully before you make any selections. It is possible that there are areas of Internet Explorer you may not wish to clean for various reasons. Once IEClean cleans up a file, all information contained within is forever lost. KNOW what you're doing before you start making choices!

    IEClean provides a very simple, single screen control panel. There are no complicated menus or other complex setups or structures in IEClean. IEClean provides 6 options on a checklist to permit the user to configure IEClean as desired on the fly. By merely clicking on any of the options, they will be enabled and a checkmark will appear indicating a desire to kill this item. If the checkmark next to the item is blank, then that action will not be taken.

    Once the configuration is selected, a simple click of the "OK" button will cause IEClean to instantly delete the desired information from the Internet Explorer file system. To make IEClean easier to use, the settings are saved by IEClean so they will always come up in the same configuration unless you decide to change any of them. Only those functions which have a checkmark next to them will occur when you hit the "OK" button.

    If you decide you don't want to delete anything, simply click on "Cancel" and no action will be taken at all. IEClean will then exit cleanly. In addition, clicking on "Cancel" leaves your checked settings as they were set before making any selections. Configuration settings are updated only when you click on "OK."

Selecting checklist items

IEClean Information
"Selecting checklist items"

    The checklist buttons are associated with the cleaning of a specific file or group of files. A check mark will appear next to those that have been activated. Those items which are not checked are ignored and left alone by IEClean. Please be sure to read about each button before you select any:

Use alias User ID while online
Kill records in history database
Kill records in URL window list
Kill records in 'cookie file' list
Kill all your 'favorites' settings
Kill cache containing old activity

    When you click on the "OK" button to perform the purge, the program will save the current checklist settings, perform the cleanup and exit automatically. Please read through the above items to determine which items you wish to set IEClean to remove for you.

IEClean Information
"Kill records of news site visits"

    Internet Explorer does not have a separate database for newsgroup information, Instead, it is rolled into the global history database. To purge newgroup data, you must purge the history database.

IEClean Information
"Kill records in history database"

    This item clears out the Internet Explorer "history" file along with other database files and encryption tools. Once cleared out of data, Internet Explorer is instructed to make brand new blank copies to replace the original files and their contents. The Internet Explorer history and related files contain a complete listing of every single picture, file, site and address you've ever seen. It maintains a list of all the web sites, gopher sites, ftp sites and every local file you've looked at in your browser (including confidential internal documents).

    Of all the portions of Internet Explorer that can raise the hackles of those who have actually examined the contents of the Internet Explorer history files, this one is the most potentially dangerous of all. Clearing out these files has no impact whatsoever on Internet Explorer.

IEClean Information
"Kill records in URL window list"

    This item clears the contents of the cutout at the top of your screen where your start page normally appears. Internet Exporer will show you a picklist of the last several places or files you've seen.

    If you have visited a site you don't want others to see in this list, you have no choice but to delete all of the contents of this window area. This button does this but does NOT delete the normal home page setting.

IEClean Information
"Kill records in 'cookie file' list"

Internet Explorer, like Netscape, maintains a file which contains "COOKIES" sent to you by web sites who want to know who you are. The "cookie" file is there for sites you call to fill up with data they want to tag your computer with, and allows them to recover any information stored within the cookie file. According to Netscape, the cookie file's purpose is to allow sites you visit to gather information about you and your habits, likes and desires.

It is further claimed that sites can only retrieve cookie information they have setup and that they somehow cannot find anything else contained in the cookie file. The author has seen little use of the cookie file, but has occasionally found data buried in it, sometimes encrypted so the net surfer cannot read what is actually in the file. The author has a belief that if the user wanted sites to have personal information, it should be asked for and the user should have the opportunity to decide whether or not to submit it.

IEClean Information
"Kill all your 'favorites' settings"

Internet Explorer maintains a bookmark database in which all bookmarks are kept. Internet Explorer calls them 'favorites'instead of 'bookmarks' as Netscape calls them.

As a result, sites that had interesting names that turned out to be porn or worse remain in the listing for posterity or for the user's children to find and then visit themselves. Selecting this option will kill ALL bookmarks in your 'favorites' file, so you should have a list of desired 'favorites' written down or saved elsewhere.

Be really sure you want to kill ALL of your 'favorite' bookmarks if you click on this.

IEClean Information
"Kill cache containing old activity"

Internet Explorer, like Netscape, creates (and uses) an entire directory of files which contain the actual text and all of the pictures from each and every web site you visit. While you are in an online session, the information contained in the cache directory is used to repaint a screen from a site you visited during this online session so the whole screen doesn't have to be loaded again from the site. This saves a considerable amount of time downloading the same screens all over again.

However - once you exit Internet Explorer, or if it gets lost among the links to other sites, or if Internet Explorer crashes, this information is useless. Internet Explorer does not have the capability (yet) to use any of this information should you exit and go back in again. The cache directory can get filled up with tens of megabytes of useless data that fills up your hard disk.

A nosy person could go into file manager and look through the various sites you've visited if they have access to your machine and can use a graphics browser to look at any or all of the pictures recorded in the cache directory as well. Internet Explorer does have an option built in to purge the contents of this directory, but it isn't all that easy to locate and use. Internet Explorer also allows you to turn off the caching, but most users find the page rebuild feature while online too useful to turn off. Turning off the caching also drastically increases the bandwidth you use on the net. Clicking here will allow you to dump the cache area whenever you want.

IEClean Information
"Having difficulty?"

INI NOT FOUND - This is the result of a misconfiguration of IEClean or of Internet Explorer. If you are NOT running Windows95, click on the [-] (close box) up on the top left corner of the dialog box. You can the use the "reconfigure" option to look at the directory IEClean presently thinks is the correct one. You can change the directory to another directory if you think Internet Explorer is in there. IEClean will test your choice to see if it has a valid install in it. If it fails the test, you will be sent back to the configuration screen.

If you are unable to get to the main screen at all, then you'll want to edit the MSCLEAN.INI file which is located in the C:directory. Locate the line which says "where=" ... if it says "where=QUIT" then you are presently set to look in the Win95 registry. Change the word QUIT or the wrong directory to the proper directory and save the MSCLEAN.INI file.

If you're using Win95, then you must run MSDEMO. If the configuration is wrong, MSDEMO will ask you to input the proper directory where Internet Explorer is installed. This directory SHOULD BE C:. IMPORTANT: If you change the directory, you must exit IEClean and then restart it for any changes to take effect.

If you're not sure where Internet Explorer is, hit the CANCEL button and use File Manager to find the directory where it actually is.

Then run MSDEMO once again, click on File on the menu header, then click on "Select Internet Explorer Directory." Type in the path where Internet Explorer is installed and if you do it right, MSDEMO will accept the input. You can quit MSDEMO at this point since IEClean is now also properly configured.

If you are using a 32 bit version of Internet Explorer with Windows95 you shouldn't see this option. If the information is in the Windows95 registry it should have been automatically found.

Please visit http://www.wizvax.net/kevinmca/ for more information.

IEClean Information
"Use alias User ID while online"

   Most people mistakenly believe "cookies" are the culprit when they suddenly begin receiving junk email. Nope. Although cookies are often part of the process, the actual snatching of your identity comes from CGI and PERL scripts that make your browser tell them your email address.

   Selecting this function writes a predetermined alias to Internet Explorer in place of your email and news usernames. This alias will be snatched instead of your real name info. You can even use the alias to post semi-anonymously to newsgroups. The alias will show publicly, but your service provider can still determine it's you should you use this feature for criminal purposes.

   When you first install IEClean you will be asked not only for your real email and news ID information, you will also be given the opportunity to put in an alias of your own choosing. Uncheck this item and your normal username and email address will be sent. If you want to change it, simply select "Reconfigure" by clicking on the "close box" [-]. Handy, no?