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## Windows Logins & Passwords

There have been a number of calls recently related to logins and passwords on Windows 2000 and XP. There are significant differences between Windows 95/98 and 2000/XP security, and I thought it might help to outline some of them for you.

### Logins under Windows 95 and 98:

Under the earlier versions of Windows there was virtually NO security for a stand-alone PC. In fact, the logins that you used under Windows 98 only allowed or blocked access to the network and file servers. If you failed to login properly, you could still use the PC as a stand alone, whether you were an authorized user or not. (We've handled a number of calls from companies that had employees, visitors or kids load their favorite software onto a "secured" Win98 PC after hours.)

### Logins under Windows 2000 and XP:

This is totally different under 2000/XP. The login and password combination can now prevent you from using the PC altogether, not just prevent access to the network. If you forget your login or password, you will not get any further than the login screen. Using the correct login and password is CRUCIAL, as is accurate spelling and capitalization. Any other combinations with either lock you out of the computer partially or completely.

### User Profiles:

Another significant difference is called User Profiles. This is a "history" of each user's settings, programs, and preferences. Effectively, a User Profile creates a virtual machine for each user, that can be totally different for every user, even on the SAME PC. This allows a user to "customize" a PC to their own preferences, and Windows will keep track of each user's settings. The downside of this feature is that some settings and software must be changed multiple times, for each user.

Profiles contain information about all of the following areas:

*Application data:* What data you can access for programs like Internet Explorer, etc.

*Cookies:* Information regarding Web sites that you visit, that "remember" your settings.

*Desktop:* Where and how your icons are displayed.

*Favorites:* What Web sites you have "book marked" or saved for quick access.

*Local Settings:* How your PC looks and operates, such as video, printer and other settings.

*My Documents:* Where your documents are typically stored on the local C: drive.

*NetHood:* Contains all of your network mappings to the servers.

*PrintHood:* Contains all of your printer settings.

*Recent:* Lists all of the files that you have worked on recently.

*Sent To:* Lists all of the files that you have sent to disk, email and others.

*Start Menu:* Controls what programs start automatically when you logon.

*Templates:* Tracks the document templates that you use in Microsoft Office.

*NT Settings:* Several system files that track your Registry settings, transactions, etc.

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In summary, User Profiles control nearly every function that you see and use on a PC. Logging in under another user will cause your computer to look, act, and "feel" totally different.

**Multiple Users:**

This becomes even more complex when several users work on the same PC, or when one person moves around to different PCs. Settings that have been changed or "fixed" for one user, may need to be changed for every other user. And logging in on a PC you have never used before can produce some very unexpected results.

**User Rights:**

Another aspect of profiles and security is User Rights. Some software can be installed on a PC but not every user may be given rights to use it. For example, MS Office might be installed on a PC, but if a user logs in under an unrecognized login and password, that user may not have access to MS Office. Rights must be assigned to the user before they can run the software.

**Conclusion:**

If this sounds complicated, that's because it is (even for us - you should see the technical documentation!) Please bear with us as we determine which types of user setup will work best at your location.

Thanks,

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