

April 6, 2009

MEMORANDUM TO:           Darren B. Ash  
                                  Deputy Executive Director  
                                  for Corporate Management  
                                  Office of the Executive Director for Operations

                                  Martin J. Virgilio  
                                  Deputy Executive Director for Materials, Waste,  
                                  Research, State, Tribal, and Compliance Programs  
                                  Office of the Executive Director for Operations

                                  Bruce S. Mallett  
                                  Deputy Executive Director for Reactor  
                                  and Preparedness Programs  
                                  Office of the Executive Director for Operations

FROM:                       Patrick D. Howard, Director        /RA/  
                                  Computer Security Office

SUBJECT:                   FEDERAL DESKTOP CORE CONFIGURATION PASSWORD  
                                  AGING EXTENSION APPROVAL

This memorandum requests your approval as the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Designated Approving Authority (DAA) to authorize the Agency to adjust the Federal Desktop Core Configuration (FDCC) password age from 60 to 90 days while retaining the NRC password length at the minimum level of 12 character, complex passwords. The rationale for this change is to reduce the burden on the user community associated with the shorter age window of 60 days. We have also found that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum, M-08-22, *Guidance on Federal Desktop Core Configuration*, allows for FDCC adjustment or tailoring of the settings if they do not materially detract from the security afforded by the settings and they are documented as part of the agency password policy. Within this memorandum, the Security Content Automation Protocol (SCAP) paragraph allows for the agency head or Chief Information Officer (CIO) to set the configuration settings that best balance risk management, the security posture of the agency and the need to support the agency mission. It is our belief that this 1/3 increase in the age of the password is acceptable provided that we maintain the minimum length and complexity of the passwords.

To understand how other federal agencies are grappling with FDCC settings, we contacted agency Chief Information and Chief Information Security Officers in agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Energy.

Each of these organizations allow their Component or sub-agency the ability to tailor their settings based on their legacy environment, their level of security defense-in-depth maturity and other specific agency risk factors.

We have also worked with the Office of Information Systems to ensure that potential operational impacts associated with our recommendation were taken into consideration and to determine when the new settings would be able to be in effect. Moving through our change management process will take 10 business days from the date of your approval, if granted. Once the new password aging parameter is in effect, users will have to change their password to begin aging them at the longer 90 day interval. Finally, if you approve of this FDCC tailoring, we will annotate this as part of our management directive (MD) 12.5 policy update. Your signatures below indicate your approval for the Computer Security Office to make this change across the NRC systems. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this request, please contact me at 301-415-6596 or via e-mail at [Patrick.Howard@nrc.gov](mailto:Patrick.Howard@nrc.gov).

Signature     /RA/     04/08/09  
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Deputy Executive Director  
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Office of the Executive Director for Operations

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cc: Thomas Boyce, OIS  
Thomas Rich, ICOD  
Thorne Graham, CSO  
Paul Ricketts, CSO  
Kathy Lyons- Burke, CSO

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