

Encrypted File Systems

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CSE 506

Goals

- ✦ Protect confidentiality of data at rest (i.e., on disk)
 - ✦ Even if the media is lost or stolen
 - ✦ Protecting confidentiality of in-memory data **much** harder
- ✦ Continue using file system features without losing confidentiality
 - ✦ Example: Backup
- ✦ Low overheads (space and CPU)
- ✦ Change keys and perhaps different keys for different data

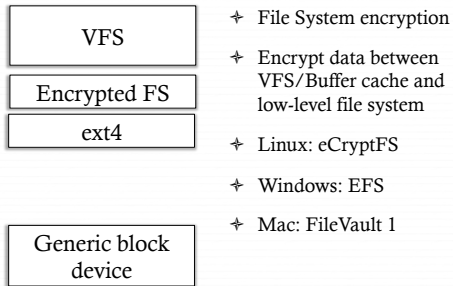
Two major approaches

VFS	✦ Block device encryption
	✦ Transparently encrypt entire partition/disk below the file system
ext4	✦ Linux: dm-crypt
Encrypted block device	✦ Windows: BitLocker
Generic block device	✦ Mac: FileVault 2

Block encryption intuition

- ✦ File system is created on a virtual block device
- ✦ Low-level read of virtual block device:
 - ✦ FS requests a block be read into page cache page X
 - ✦ Map to block(s) on real device
 - ✦ Request that blocks be read into a temporary page Y
 - ✦ Decrypt page X into page X
 - ✦ Return to file system
- ✦ Similarly, writes encrypt pages before sending to disk

Two major approaches



File-based intuition

- ✦ Idea: Mount a layered file system over a real one
- ✦ Application writes encrypted file 'foo'
- ✦ Encrypted FS opens real file foo
 - ✦ Stores some crypto metadata (like the cipher used) at the front
 - ✦ Encrypts pages in page cache, transparently writes at an offset

File-based intuition

- ✦ Read of file 'bar'
 - ✦ Encrypted FS asks real FS for file 'bar'
 - ✦ Uses metadata + secret key to decrypt
 - ✦ Stores decrypted pages in page cache
- ✦ Challenges:
 - ✦ Managing private keys
 - ✦ Enforcing read protection on decrypted data in page cache

Pros/Cons of disk encryption

- ✦ Pros:
 - ✦ Hides directory structure, used space, etc
 - ✦ Metadata matters!
 - ✦ Can put any file system on top of it
- ✦ Cons:
 - ✦ Everything encrypted with one key
 - ✦ Encryption provides no confidentiality between users on a shared system
 - ✦ Data must be re-encrypted before send on network
 - ✦ Encryption overhead for public data (like /etc/hostname)

Vs. FS encryption

- ✦ Pros:
 - ✦ Per-user (or per directory or file) encryption
 - ✦ Only encrypt truly secret data
 - ✦ Possibly send an encrypted file across network; use key (sent separately!) to decrypt on remote host
- ✦ Cons:
 - ✦ Harder to hide/obfuscate directory structure and metadata
 - ✦ More keys to manage
 - ✦ Possibly easier to steal keys (debatable--harder to use TPMs)

Challenges

- ✦ Key management
- ✦ Read protection of live data
 - ✦ Swapping
- ✦ Booting the OS

Key management

- ✦ Or, where do we keep the secret key?
- ✦ Not in the file system!
 - ✦ There is a bootstrapping problem here
- ✦ Ideas?

Trusted Platform Module

- ✦ New hardware extension – common on PCs in last few years
 - ✦ Either on motherboard or in CPU chip itself
- ✦ Provides two useful features:
 - ✦ **Measured Execution:** Basically, checks that the booted code (BIOS, bootloader, OS) match a given hash
 - ✦ Useful to detect tampering with your software
 - ✦ **Scaled Storage:** Store a very small amount of data in non-volatile memory in the TPM chip
 - ✦ Only accessible from code with hash that wrote it

TPM Idea

- ✦ Store the private key for the file system in the TPM's sealed storage
- ✦ Only the trusted BIOS/bootloader/OS can access the decryption key
 - ✦ The drive alone gets you nothing!
 - ✦ Tampering with the OS image (on disk) to dump the disk contents gets you nothing!

Small problem

- ✦ Motherboard or CPU dies, taking TPM with it
- ✦ How to decrypt your files then?
 - ✦ BitLocker: As part of initialization, allow user to print a page with the decryption key. Put this in a safe place (not laptop bag)

Key management in FS-level encryption

- ✦ Each user has a key chain of decryption keys
 - ✦ Kernel is trusted with these keys
- ✦ On-disk, keychain is encrypted with a master key
- ✦ Master key is protected with a passphrase
 - ✦ That just happens to be the logon credentials
- ✦ So, with a user's passphrase, we can decrypt the master key for her home directory, then decrypt the keyring, then the home directory

Challenge 2

- ✦ The unencrypted data in the page cache needs to be protected
- ✦ If I encrypt my home directory, but make it world readable, any user on the system can still read my home directory!
- ✦ Encryption is no substitute for access control!

Swapping

- ✦ Care must be taken to prevent swapping of unencrypted data
 - ✦ **Or keys!**
 - ✦ If part of the file system/key management is in a user daemon, unencrypted keys can be swapped
- ✦ One strategy: Swap to an encrypted disk
- ✦ Another strategy: Give the encrypted file system hooks to re-encrypt data before it is written out to disk
 - ✦ Or put the swap file on the encrypted FS
- ✦ Subtle issue

Challenge 3: Booting

- ✦ You can't boot an encrypted kernel
- ✦ Decryption facilities usually need a booted kernel to work
- ✦ Big win for FS encryption: Don't encrypt files needed for boot
- ✦ Disk encryption: Usually puts files needed for boot on a separate (unencrypted) partition

Summary

- ✦ Two main types of encrypted storage:
 - ✦ Block and file system encryption
- ✦ Understand pros and cons of each
- ✦ Understand key challenges:
 - ✦ Key management
 - ✦ Swapping
 - ✦ Booting