

Re: Locking Computer Software

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"KG6VQE @thecomputerdood.com>" <info<nospam> wrote in message news:W%4nd.19154\$zx1.12611@newssvr13.news.prodigy.com...

- > *If you are using a "NT CLASS" computer (Windows 2000 Pro, or Windows XP),*
- > *and you have your disks formatted using NTFS, that is a very secure system.*
- > *There are NTFS DOS programs that MAY let someone look into your disks, but*
- > *they would have be very sophisticated, and have physical access to the*
- > *machine. first thing I would do is remove (or disconnect) the floppy drive.*
- > *That would force someone to use a bootable CDROM to try and hack into your*
- > *system.*

What? If somebody has physical access to the machine then NTFS does nothing whatsoever to prevent them from accessing it. DOS boot disks that can read (many also write) the NTFS filesystem without restrictions are freely available from the net. Any recent linux live CD can mount an NTFS filesystem for read access too. This is hardly "very secure". I could walk up to your computer with one of these disks, stick it in the floppy drive, boot up the computer from the boot disk, and read any of your files without limitation.

- > *As for physical ways, the simplest is to purchase a Key Lock, and use it to*
 - > *interrupt the power to the keyboard. All P.C. Keyboards have*
 - > *microcontrollers in them, that rely on the 5 Volt power. If you disrupt*
 - > *that, then the keyboad gets no juice, and is esentially dead. There are*
 - > *commecial products that are plug in boards, that contain the BIOS*
- Signature
- > *AA55, which when booting indicated that that piece of hardware must*
 - execute
 - > *before others boot. These boards then have a ROM BASED program, that asks*
 - > *for a password, before the machine will boot. The only problem is this*
 - can
 - > *be defeated by removing the board.*

If the case is opened, a keylock does very little and can be bypassed.

With the cheaper locks that only shut off the keyboard power it would be

easy to build an adaptor that powered it from a battery pack. This wouldn't even require the case to be opened.

Removing the motherboard would be much harder than just removing the hard drive and connecting it to another computer so this isn't a likely method of attack. BIOS passwords are effective against stopping guests in your house from starting your computer though. If protection of specific files against any regular user of the computer is required then this would be useless since they would need to know the BIOS password to start the computer up.

- > *All these assume that the "hacker" has physical access to the machine, and*
- > *can take it apart to diagnose. If you are talking about a sibling,*
- > *co-worker, or Mom and Dad, the NTFS locking method would prevent the casual*
- > *user from using the system. Of course if someone has unfettered access,*
- > *then they can always extract the disk drive, and use another machine to read*
- > *the files.*

Yes, the permissions system built into the filesystem will protect against casual attempts.

The only way to properly secure the information of your computer against a physical attack is encryption. I believe WinXP Pro has the ability to do full disk encryption but if that's not an option for you then you can use software like PGPDisk to protect your valuable information.

For casual stuff, just set your computer up with an administrator and a set of limited users and restrict the permissions on certain files and programs. Having said this, I tried to do this on WinXP Home a few days ago and found that I couldn't do much at all under the limited accounts. The entire system is infuriatingly inflexible.