

Windows Explorer may expose FTP passwords in plaintext

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If you use Windows Explorer to open an FTP site that requires a password, Explorer may display the password in clear text in the future through the autocomplete feature in Explorer's Address bar. I've tried this on one XP SP3 machine and the password DOES appear, but on another XP SP3 machine only the username appears. Steps to reproduce:

1. Open Windows Explorer and if necessary enable the display of the Address bar
2. In the Address bar, enter the URI of an FTP server that does not permit anonymous access and on which you have an account, e.g. <ftp://host.domain.com/myfolder>
3. Windows Explorer will prompt you for a username and password, and then will display the folder contents
4. Close Windows Explorer, then open Windows Explorer again.
5. In the Address bar, type ftp:

At this point autocomplete should kick in and display the URI with at least your username and maybe the password displayed in clear text, e.g.

<ftp://username:password@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx/somefolder>

The version with the username and password don't appear in the Address bar's MRU dropdown, but just in prompts popped up by autocomplete. The password does not seem to appear in plaintext in the Registry.

As I said, have one machine that reliably shows the password, and another that doesn't.

Does anyone else find that the password is displayed?

(No need to discuss the insecurity of FTP itself—that's not the issue here. This is about the potential for exposing previously used passwords on the desktop)

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