

# Network at MIT - Security Primer for UNIX System Administrators

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### Context

Achieving reasonable security for multi-user systems (such as UNIX) takes time and effort, and once implemented, requires periodic review. It's not remarkably difficult, but does require a certain thoroughness of effort. Security is often an endeavor where a 90% effort is the same as no effort at all.

### In case of a break-in

Outlined [here](#) are steps to take when you discover a break-in on a machine you administer.

What to do if you realize your password or system has been [compromised](#).

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Q: How should we make our network secure?

Owners, administrators, and users of machines on MITnet must make reasonable efforts to protect their computers. This includes:

- Correctly configuring the operating system to eliminate security holes.
- Choosing and using good [passwords](#), that are not easy to guess or crack.
- Keeping abreast of (and correcting!) newly identified weaknesses in the operating system, and other threats:
  - The Computer Emergency Response Team ([CERT](#)) at Carnegie Mellon University issues advisories detailing system weaknesses and how to correct them, along with other security information. Worth checking for information about your operating system.
  - Subscribe to the **netusers** mailing list, a low-traffic list where significant network events, like outages or security notifications, are sent by the operations staff. You can subscribe by the Athena mailmaint program, or by sending mail to [netusers-request@mit.edu](mailto:netusers-request@mit.edu).
- Never sending passwords or other sensitive information over the network in the clear.

### See More

- The [Bugtraq mailing list](#) is for detailed discussion of UNIX security holes: what they are, how to exploit, and what to do to fix them. You may subscribe to the list by sending email to [listserv@netspace.org](mailto:listserv@netspace.org) with the words **subscribe bugtraq** in the body of your message.
- The [Best of Security mailing list](#) is a compilation of the interesting information from several other security-oriented mailing lists. You may subscribe to the list by sending email to [majordomo@suburbia.net](mailto:majordomo@suburbia.net) with the words **subscribe best-of-security** in the body of your message.
- [linux-security@redhat.com](mailto:linux-security@redhat.com) discusses security holes in Linux. To subscribe, send mail with **subscribe** as the subject to [linux-security-request@redhat.com](mailto:linux-security-request@redhat.com). This list is archived in the net-defense discuss meeting on [bloom-picayune.mit.edu](http://bloom-picayune.mit.edu).