Locking down access

Protect Your Data!

Your data is valuable. You know what a challenge it would be if you lost it. Letting the unknown have access to it would be as bad if not worse. We set about the task of protection because if you don't you can bet someone will compromise you. BY JOHN SOUTHERN

These days computer hardware is relatively cheap. Data however has a far greater value. Whether that value is simply the pain of retyping your data back in again or the cost of having to change systems and practices because someone has copied your information does not really matter. Sooner or later you need to ensure it is safe.

We first take a look at how to ensure your computer is hardened from outside attack. This we do by considering the collection of services that a typical distribution initializes. We look at how to limit their security weaknesses and which can be disabled.

On page 24 we look at how to stop spam. Spam may not seem a major problem at the moment but as we get more each day, the time we spend on handling it is rapidly growing. For some, it is becoming an unnecessary chore that threatens our enjoyment of email. Setting up spam filters can take some of the pain away and safeguard our data by not having it swamped under a morass of un-special offers.

Those who want to be connected at all times need to choose a sentinel to act as a gatekeeper and guard against intrusion. Defending our data from hidden foes is the job of a trustworthy firewall. Setting up such an important application need not be hard or complicated with the aid of IPCop.

On page 31 we consider what happens when you lose a laptop. Although you have to assume the worst, not everything is automatically compromized if you have initiated an encrypted filesystem. These previously required you to recompile the kernel and were only used in the realms of spying. Now everything has become easier and you get to keep secrets with the best.

Next we teach you all the skills needed to recover data from a failing hard disk. Hopefully you will never need to do this, but you should know how in case the worst does happen. You can also bet that the worst will happen at the most inconvenient time. Just like a boy scout you should be prepared.

Finally we cover how to set up your own virtual network. Although you can pay to have this done for you, the costs associated with this task are normally high. With Linux it does not have to be. A private network lets you connect and transfer data seamlessly regardless of the physical distance.

Cover Story