

Taking the “sword” out of “password”

Using new and existing RACF password controls to reduce your risk of breaches

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June 4, 2015

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Agenda

- Passwords are a problem
- The nature of offline password attacks
- What are the elements of an effective password policy?
- What makes a password weak or strong?
- How can I implement my own password rules quickly?



Background

- Despite increasing use of biometrics, digital certificates, tokens, etc, passwords are likely to be around for a long time still.
- Human nature makes us sloppy and lazy. The easier a password is to remember and to type, the more likely we are to use it.
- The easier a password is to remember, the more likely it is that somebody else is going to guess it.
- The harder a password is to remember, the more likely we are to write it down.



When you leave users to their own devices

- They are going to choose bad passwords
- And use them on facebook, LinkedIn, Yahoo mail, etc
- And never change them
- And give them away



https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=opRMrEfAlil Feb 23, 2015



Level set: what is an offline attack?

- Someone steals a password database, by
 - Exploiting a software vulnerability
 - Exploiting a misconfiguration
 - Stealing/guessing credentials
 - Being, or enlisting, a disgruntled insider
- Then attacks the hashed passwords at home using their own equipment. Access to host machine is not required once the password database is stolen.
- This does NOT go thru the normal login-process. It does not even have to run on the same operating system. There is no revocation mechanism involved.
- Speed is limited to available hardware.



How are password crackers trying to obtain passwords?

- Offline attacks employ the following strategies
 - Dictionary
 - Modified dictionary replacing O with 0, I with 1, s with \$, etc
 - Try lists of actual passwords stolen elsewhere
 - Try popular patterns (Upper, 5 lowers, 2 digits and “!”)
 - Target individuals based on info obtained online (family/pet names, sports teams, employer, birthday, etc)
 - Brute force, when all else fails



What resources are available to password crackers?

- Cheap powerful GPUs used in parallel. Advanced hardware is now available on a 'kid-with-summer-job' budget.
- ASICs (application-specific integrated circuit) and FPGAs (field-programmable gate arrays)
- Botnets
- **Off the shelf software** such as oclHashcat and John the Ripper
 - JtR now has a RACF/DES feature!
- Freely available dictionaries, password lists, and “rainbow tables” (pre-computed dictionary hashes used for fast brute-force attacking)



What can you do as a security admin?

- Educate your users to
 - not share or otherwise divulge passwords
 - not use your RACF password on other sites
 - not use discernible patterns even if they slip by the enforced rules
 - Take a look at that “last access” message when you logon



What can you do as a security admin? ...

- “Help” your users choose better passwords
 - Assign password phrases where possible
 - Implement history and a minimum change interval to prevent password reuse/cycling
 - SETROPTS PASSWORD (HISTORY (8) MINCHANGE (5))
 - And make sure your reset procedure/software has no loopholes
 - When phrases are not possible, enable mixed case and special characters in passwords
 - Force a mixture of character types
 - Implement the Rexx-based sample new password exit



What can you do as a security admin to thwart attackers?

- Carefully protect the RACF database and its copies and backups!
 - (Almost) nobody needs READ access
 - An insider with READ can perform an offline attack at their leisure
- Limit invalid password attempts to a very small number
 - SETROPTS PASSWORD (REVOKE (3))
 - At the risk of (possibly self-inflicted) DoS attacks
 - Is your green-screen logon panel available on the internet?
<http://mainframesproject.tumblr.com>



What can you do as a security admin to thwart attackers? ...

- Audit/pen-test your RACF database
 - Password cracking tools are for white-hats also
 - Use results to modify your password rules
- Embrace your paranoia: pretend an attacker has your database
 - Enforce a password change interval shorter than the amount of time an attacker can reasonably crack a password

```
SETROPTS PASSWORD (INTERVAL (90) )
```

– **Do you know** when you've been breached?

- Enable strong password encryption



Strong encryption: KDFAES!

- New algorithm available with OA43999

1) Start with:

- DES hash for passwords
 - This step maintains upward compatibility in some cases
- Clear-text password phrase

2) Append random text (salt)

- This step defeats “rainbow tables”

3) Iteratively hash (SHA256) this text a (large) number of times to derive a 256-bit AES key

- This step is intentionally slowing down an offline brute-force attack

4) Encrypt the RACF user ID with the AES key

- This step appeases your auditors because you are using “an approved algorithm”



Enabling KDFAES: Death to ICHDEX01! Long live SETROPTS!

- Enabling is easy (warning...read the planning considerations first!!!)

```
SETROPTS PASSWORD (ALGORITHM (KDFAES) )
```

- Seeing if it is enabled is easy!

```
SETROPTS LIST
```

```
PASSWORD PROCESSING OPTIONS:
```

```
THE ACTIVE PASSWORD ENCRYPTION ALGORITHM IS KDFAES
```

```
PASSWORD CHANGE INTERVAL IS 60 DAYS.
```

```
PASSWORD MINIMUM CHANGE INTERVAL IS 3 DAYS.
```

```
MIXED CASE PASSWORD SUPPORT IS IN EFFECT
```

```
SPECIAL CHARACTERS ARE ALLOWED.
```

```
... ..
```

- And with OA45608, the new RACF_ENCRYPTION_ALGORITHM Health Check reports the active algorithm



When KDFAES is activated

- Existing DES passwords will continue to be evaluated properly
 - There will be no fallback to masking during evaluation
- When next changed, KDFAES will be used
- If you are paranoid that somebody is **about** to steal your database, you can convert passwords and history to KDFAES without requiring any password changes!

```
ALTUSER STU PWCONVERT
```

–Or, to do it in bulk

```
SEARCH CLASS(USER) CLIST('ALTUSER ' ' PWCONVERT') NOLIST  
EX 'prefix.EXEC.RACF.CLIST'
```

–Note: phrases and phrase history cannot be converted



Administrative password expiration: new with OA43999

- If you are paranoid that somebody may have **just** stolen your database (perhaps a recent DES-based backup), you can force users to change their password/phrase at next logon

```
ALTUSER STU EXPIRED
```

–Or, to do it in bulk

```
SEARCH CLASS(USER) CLIST('ALTUSER ' ' EXPIRED') NOLIST  
EX 'prefix.EXEC.RACF.CLIST'
```

- And if you were already using phrases, this will get users to change them faster after enabling KDFAES
- Can also be useful to force changes when your password rules change



Speaking of password rules...

- Strong encryption is not sufficient to protect weak passwords

- Passwords are generally stronger when
 - they are as long as possible/reasonable
 - they allow a large set of characters to be used
 - and those characters are **actually** used
 - they appear to be essentially random

- A number of mechanisms exist to enforce strong “passwords”



Password phrases

- Take another look. More applications support phrases now than when they were introduced in z/OS V1R8, including
 - TSO/E
 - NFS
 - IBM LDAP
 - IBM z/OS UNIX and LE
 - OpenSSH
 - IBM Network Authentication Services (Kerberos)
 - The FTP and TN3270 servers provided with z/OS Communications Server
 - Tivoli NetView for z/OS, Version 5.4
 - IBM Session Manager for z/OS V3.1
 - CICS Transaction Server for z/OS, Version 4 Release 2
 - DB2 V10 for z/OS
 - WebSphere AppServer V6.1 and later
 - IMS V12
 - OMEGAMON e3270 UI
 - IBM zSecure suite
 - Connect:Direct (up to 64 characters)



Password phrases ...

- The idea is that they are easy to remember, **and** they are longer and harder to crack than passwords.
<https://xato.net/passwords/a-line-from-sf-to-ny/>
- Examples:
 - You should read Love in the Time of Cholera
 - Touchdown! Gronk spike ball!
 - I really hate my boss
 - You're gonna need a bigger boat
 - and she's buy-uy-ing a stairway to heaven
 - cattle lakeshore stripmall bridge office
- Should also intentionally misspell/reorder some words, add symbolics here and there, etc, to stay ahead of the password crackers
<http://arstechnica.com/security/2013/08/thereisnofatebutwhatwemake-turbo-charged-cracking-comes-to-long-passwords/>



Password phrases ...

- With OA43999, users can be assigned a phrase without also requiring a password:

```
ADDUSER JOE NOPASSWORD PHRASE('This is a temp phrase')
ALTUSER BOB NOPASSWORD PHRASE('This is a temp phrase')
```

- Some users cannot always use phrases. For example, console logon does not support it.
- Such users will need a password, and also having a phrase doesn't really add any protection
 - They'll never use it
 - Attackers will go after the password
 - The password can also be used to logon



If you can't use phrases, at least make your passwords stronger

- Upper case letters, digits, and nationals (@#\$)
 - $39^{**8} = 5,352,009,260,481$ possible 8-character passwords
- Take another look at mixed case passwords, more applications support them than when they were introduced in z/OS V1R7
 - SETROPTS PASSWORD (MIXEDCASE)
 - $65^{**8} = 318,644,812,890,625$ possible 8-character passwords
- Consider the new special character support in OA43999
 - SETROPTS PASSWORD (MIXEDCASE SPECIALCHARS)
 - Adds the following characters: ! % & * - _ = + | : < > . ?
 - $79^{**8} = 1,517,108,809,906,561$ possible 8-character passwords
 - Can force a password to contain one each of upper, lower, digit, and symbol (new characters plus nationals)
 - SETROPTS PASSWORD (RULE1 (LENGTH (8) MIXEDALL (1 : 8)))



Password quality

If you could try one million



passwords per second:

- NOMIXEDCASE/NOSPECIALCHARS = 62 days max to crack a password
 - MIXEDCASE/NOSPECIALCHARS = 3688 days = >10 years
 - MIXEDCASE/SPECIALCHARS = 17559 days = >48 years
- How many passwords **can** a cracker guess in a second?
 - It depends

<http://arstechnica.com/security/2012/12/25-gpu-cluster-cracks-every-standard-windows-password-in-6-hours/>

–But if your password = “PASSWORD”, it doesn't matter



Password quality ...

- Users can still do the wrong thing, even with syntax rules in place

```
SETROPTS PASSWORD (MIXEDCASE SPECIALCHARS  
                    RULE1 (LENGTH (8) MIXEDALL (1 : 8) ) )
```

- Bruce01!, Bruce02!, Bruce03!, etc

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qR-qRUbeKAo>

–23:56 - “I've never seen password complexity programs/rules that prevent common password patterns.”

- Native RACF rules can not prevent this
- You need a new password exit (ICHPWX01)
- Thankfully, it does not need to be difficult!
- And consider: if someone steals your RACF database, they also have your password rules to focus their attack. But if your rules are in an exit...



Implement your own password rules

- In Rexx!
- Using the sample provided on the RACF web site
 - <http://www-03.ibm.com/systems/z/os/zos/features/racf/downloads/rexxpwexit.html>
- Consists of:
 - The traditional assembler part: ICHPWX01
 - Assemble, link edit, IPL – once – to get it active
 - But first:
 - The Rexx part containing the rule logic: IRRPWREX
 - Put it in your System Rexx concatenation
 - Make a change, save the file, change is active! (but test it first!)
 - You can install IRRPWREX without ICHPWX01 being active, but the converse is not true!



Features of the sample

- ICHPWX01
 - System Programmer Override, in case of emergency
 - When the only gal who can fix your problem can't logon because her password is expired, you have a problem
 - Grant READ access to IRR.ICHPWX01.OVERRIDE in FACILITY class to allow logon w/ password change when there is a Sysrex error (the rules obviously aren't being enforced, but SETROPTS is)
- IRRPWREX
 - Debug mode
 - Pre-provided checks that can be enabled by simply changing a configuration variable
 - A single config variable enables the checks that satisfy the DISA STIG
 - Ability to query the active settings from the console
- Readme file



System Rexx configuration

- IRRPWREX must exist in your REXXLIB concatenation when ICHPWX01 calls it
 - System Rexx default library is SYS1.SAXREXEC
 - Can add others in your AXRxx member in SYS1.PARMLIB

```
REXXLIB ADD DSN(BRWELLS.SAXREXEC) VOL(D94001)
```
 - AXRUSER(userid) specifies the identity under which the exec will run
- AXR=xx keyword in IEASYSxx points to the AXRxx member in use
 - Default is AXR00 if AXR= not specified
- Or, 0,SYSP=(AA,BB,CC),AXR=xx during IPL
- See the AXRxx chapter in MVS Initialization and Tuning Reference



Checks provided in IRRPWREX

- Minimum length violation
- Password contains disallowed characters
- Password does not contain at least one character from a specified number of character types (numbers, letters, special)
- Password contains part of user's name
- Password is only trivially different from previous value
- Password does not contain enough character differences, by position, from previous value
- Password contains a word from the restricted word list
- Password contains too many unchanged characters, by position, from previous value
- Password does not contain enough new characters from previous value
- Password does not contain all unique characters
- Password contains "consecutive" characters
- Password contains the user ID, or some subset of the user ID
- Password contains too many repeating characters
- Password starts with a string from the restricted prefix list
- Password uses a restricted pattern



Debug mode

- Helpful when implementing for the first time, to confirm the exit is being called successfully

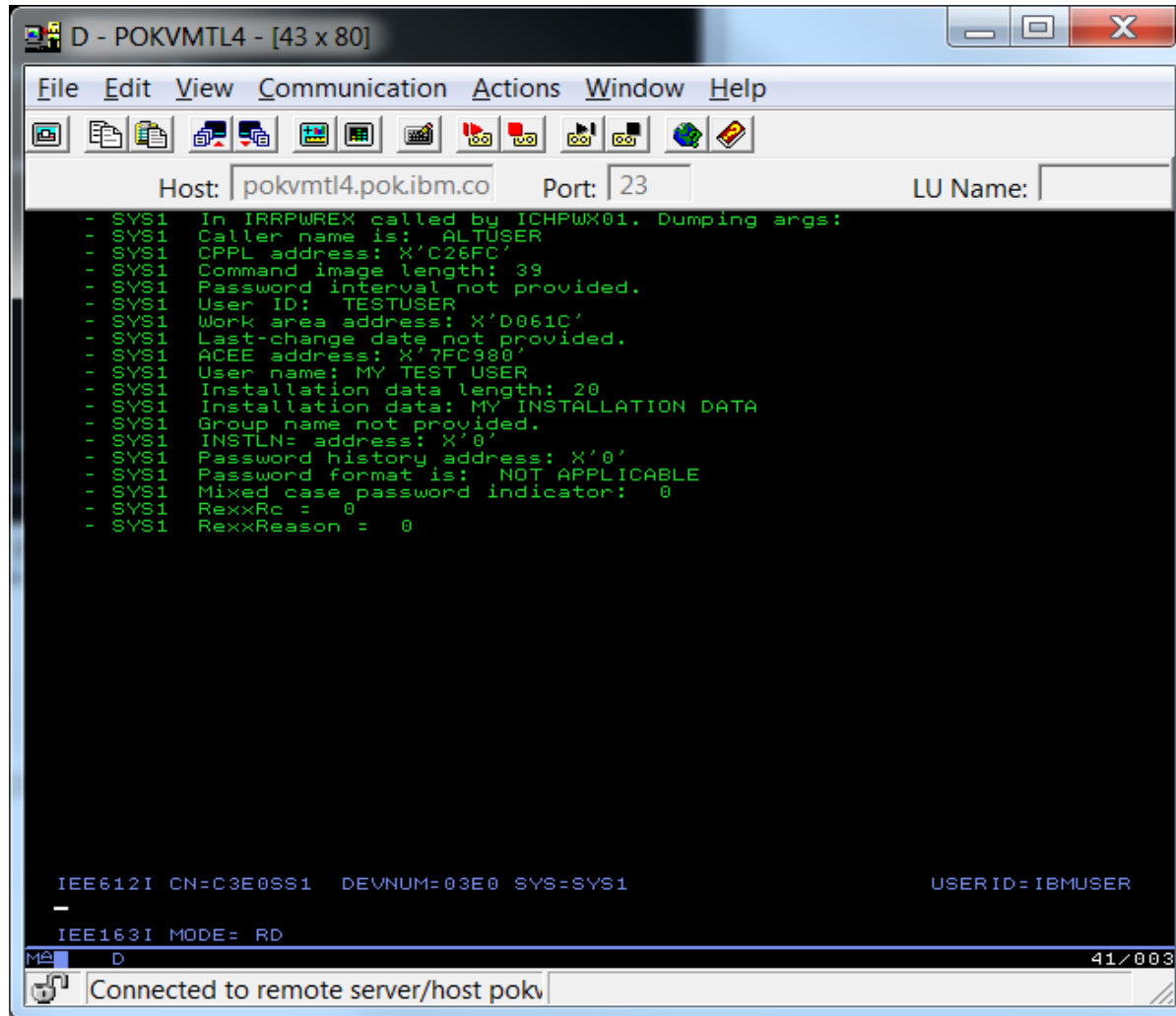
```
/*-----*/  
/*  Debug mode.  If 'on', the input arguments and final return      */  
/*  and reason code are dumped to the console using WTO.           */  
/*                                                                    */  
/*  Note that System REXX provides additional functions from the   */  
/*  AXREXX macro which could be useful for debugging.  ICHPWX01    */  
/*  would need to be modified to exploit these.                   */  
/*                                                                    */  
debug = 'on'
```

```
ALTUSER TESTUSER PASSWORD(ABC) NOEXPIRED
```

results in the following on the console (next slide)....



Debug mode output out of the box



Enabling checks: example

```

/*-----*/
/*  Minimum unique characters by position. This check prevents      */
/*  a new password which differs by only a few character positions  */
/*  from the old password. For example, changing the password from */
/*    AFD4TRH                                                       */
/*  to                                                               */
/*    BFD3TRH                                                       */
/*                                                                    */
/*  An associated variable controls whether the passwords are first */
/*  upper-cased before the check is performed. The check is        */
/*  performed for the length of the smaller string, so even if the  */
/*  new password is longer than the old, this rule could still fail */
/*  the change if there aren't enough unique characters in the     */
/*  beginning part.                                                */
/*                                                                    */
/*  This check is only performed for PASSWORD and RACINIT, since   */
/*  ALTUSER does not provide the old password.                     */
/*                                                                    */
/*  This check may be enabled by changing the setting to a non-zero */
/*  value.                                                           */
/*                                                                    */
Pwd_min_unique = 0      <=== Change to 5, for example

Pwd_min_unique_upper = 'yes'

```



Enabling checks: example – What if my policy is the DISA STIG?

```

/*-----*/
/*  STIG compliance.                                */
/*  */                                              */
/*  This check automatically enables the other checks that enforce */
/*  compliance with the United States Defense Information Systems  */
/*  Agency's (DISA) Security Technical Implementation Guide (STIG) */
/*  V6R21 with regard to RACF password quality rules, to the extent */
/*  possible, taking some liberties on the content of the user ID  */
/*  and user name that are checked.                    */
/*  */                                              */
/*  Not all the subsequent checks are relevant to the STIG, and  */
/*  they may also be enabled as desired. A STIG-relevant check  */
/*  will be identified with an asterisk to the left of the first  */
/*  line of its description.                            */
/*  */                                              */
/*  Changing the value of STIG_Compliant to 'yes' will result in */
/*  the relevant checks being enabled, regardless of any changes */
/*  made to the explicit checks immediately below.          */
/*  */                                              */
STIG_Compliant = 'yes'                /* Enforce DISA STIG compliance */

```



Query setting from the console using the Sysrex “modify” command

```
F axr,irrpwrex list
```

The following IRRPWREX password exit rules are in place:

- STIG compliance is explicitly specified

- The minimum password length is 8

- The number of required character types is 4

- The user's name cannot be contained in the password

 - Only 3 consecutive characters of the user's name are allowed

 - The minimum word length checked is 8

- The user ID cannot be contained in the password

 - Only 3 consecutive characters of the user ID are allowed

- All characters in the new password must be unique

- No consecutive characters (e.g. AB or 12) are allowed

 - This check is not case sensitive

There is also a “robot-friendly” output format suitable for consumption by programs



Case study: Implementing the topology check



```
/*-----*/
/* Pattern check. This is sort of like the SETROPTS password */
/* rules in reverse, in that we specify patterns (or "topologies") */
/* that can *not* be used, as opposed to those that *can* be used. */
/* The default patterns specified below are the ones most */
/* frequently encountered by password crackers and penetration */
/* testers for 8-character passwords. As such, these patterns */
/* are the first ones tried in a brute-force attack. Of course, */
/* these defaults may not be in sync with other of your password */
/* policy settings. */
/* */
/* U = upper, L = lower, N = number, and S = special. */
/* */
/* Strings defined in this list will be upper-cased prior to the */
/* check. */
/* */
/* To enable this check, add/remove/alter patterns as desired and */
/* set Pwd_pattern.0 to the resulting number of restricted */
/* patterns. */
/* */
Pwd_pattern.0 = 0
Pwd_pattern.1 = 'ULLLLLLLN'
Pwd_pattern.2 = 'ULLLLLLLS'
Pwd_pattern.3 = 'ULLLLLLNN'
Pwd_pattern.4 = 'ULLLNNNNN'
Pwd_pattern.5 = 'ULLLLLLNS'
Pwd_pattern.6 = 'ULLNNNNNS'
Pwd_pattern.7 = 'ULLSNNNNN'
```



```

/*****
/* Build the pattern string by assigning the appropriate */
/* "pattern character" for each position of the password. */
/*****
Do I = 1 to Length(newPwd)
  chk_letter = Substr(newPwd,I,1)
  Select
    When verify(chk_letter,Upper_letters,Match) /= 0 Then
      pattern_string = pattern_string || 'U'
    When verify(chk_letter,Lower_letters,Match) /= 0 Then
      pattern_string = pattern_string || 'L'
    When verify(chk_letter,numbers,Match) /= 0 Then
      pattern_string = pattern_string || 'N'
    Otherwise
      pattern_string = pattern_string || 'S'
  End /* Select */
End /* For each password character */

/*****
/* Now see if the constructed pattern string matches any of */
/* the restricted patterns. */
/*****
Do I = 1 to Pwd_pattern.0
  UpperPattern = Pwd_pattern.I
  Upper UpperPattern
  If UpperPattern = pattern_string Then
    Do
      REXXReason = 15
      signal pwdexit
    End
  End
End /* For each restricted pattern */

```

So what **IS** a good password? A “random” one.

- Make a sentence
 - Dad ate **6** donuts for breakfast today = d8Sdf%ft
- Enumerate objects in a visual space, such as a house, store, office, etc
 - bsK9ck+d (When I go home, I enter through the **b**asement, see some **s**hoes, my dog greets me! When I go upstairs, I hang my coat in the **c**loset, go into the **k**itchen, and bonus, **d**inner's ready!)
 - Practice it
- Channel your inner misspeller
- Use a password manager
- Use 2-factor when available
- Google the topic; there's no shortage of opinions!
- What's your favorite strategy?



What about phrase rules?

- A Rexx-based ICHPWX11/IRRPHREX is provided in SYS1.SAMPLIB
- ICHPWX11 is shipped link-edited into LINKLIB, so you can skip the assemble and link-edit steps
 - Copy IRRPHREX from SAMPLIB into the REXXLIB concatenation
 - Copy the ICHPWX11 module from LINKLIB to LPA
 - IPL
- It is very similar to ICHPWX01/IRRPWREX, and the password readme can be helpful for understanding it
- It does not have the ability to query its rules from the console
- Why is one in samplib and one on the web site? History.



Checks provided in IRRPHREX

- Minimum length violation
- Maximum length violation
- Phrase contains disallowed characters
- Phrase contains leading blanks
- Phrase contains trailing blanks
- Phrase contains part of user's name
- Phrase is only trivially different from previous value
- Phrase does not contain enough character differences from previous value
- Phrase does not contain enough unique word differences from previous value
- Phrase contains a word from the restricted word list



Coming in z/OS V2R2

- You never need an ICHDEX01 exit unless you are implementing your own password algorithm
- RACF_ENCRYPTION_ALGORITHM Health Check raises an exception if KDFAES is not active
- ADDUSER will not assign a default password

```
ADDUSER BOB TSO(...) OMVS(...) NAME('Bob Hansel')
ICH01024I User BOB is defined as PROTECTED.
```

 - ALTUSER and PASSWORD cannot be used to reset a password to the user's default group
 - It can, of course, be explicitly assigned...if your rules allow it!
- RACLINK DEFINE(*node.user/pwd*) supports password phrases
- The RACF ISPF panels support the new OA43999 functions



Lessons learned – What can you do?

- Gnash teeth
- Pull out hair
- Curl up in a fetal position
- Drink heavily
- Unplug your server



<http://www.theonion.com/articles/after-checking-your-bank-account-remember-to-log-o,32260/>



And then ...

- Revisit your password policy
- Double check your RACF database protection (and anywhere else you may be storing passwords/keys)
 - Review your backup policy
- Check out the new OA43999 functions
- Take another look at password phrases and mixed case passwords
- Take a look at ICHPWX01/IRRPWREX
- Re-educate your users (and yourself)
- Stay on top of trends and developments

