

Upgrade wireless network security

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Do you think the wireless network I am using is really safe? It is better to reconsider this issue. The latest Wi-Fi security standard, called Wireless Protected Access 2 (WPA2), adds professional data encryption capabilities, which appeared more than a year ago but most users still don't use it. this standard.

The fact that WPA2 is worth installing because of the previous WPA security standard can easily be "unlocked", unless you use a password that is longer than 20 characters and cannot be combined with words easy to guess.

While WPA's brother, Wired Equivalent Privacy (WEP), is still in use, although it is only slightly safer than not using a security measure. WEP can be cracked within a few seconds regardless of the complexity of the key you set.

If your security goal is to prevent other users from connecting to the network, then WEP meets that requirement. However, if you want to strictly protect your personal data, it is best to apply WPA2.

Before adding WPA2 security to the network, you must download and install the WPA2 upgrade hotfix for Windows XP. In addition, you also need to install the latest version for the wireless network device driver (driver) from the manufacturer's website. Microsoft's Windows Update website often lists updates in the "Hardware, Optional" section. Note, you only see this option when using copyrighted Windows.

Next, download and update the latest firmware for the wireless router (router) from the manufacturer's website (refer to the list of products that support WPA2 here. If the router is using too old to update WPA2 / WPA is best to replace it because the new device is quite cheap, about 35 USD.

Once fully prepared, use a browser to access the router's administration website (see the documentation that came with the device to know exactly how to do it) and change the default security mode to WPA2 Personal: select WPA algorithm as TKIP + AGES and enter the password in WPA Shared Key (Figure 1). Passwords can consist of alphanumeric characters, with a maximum length of 63 characters. On subsequent login attempts, the system will prompt you to enter the WPA Shared Key password.

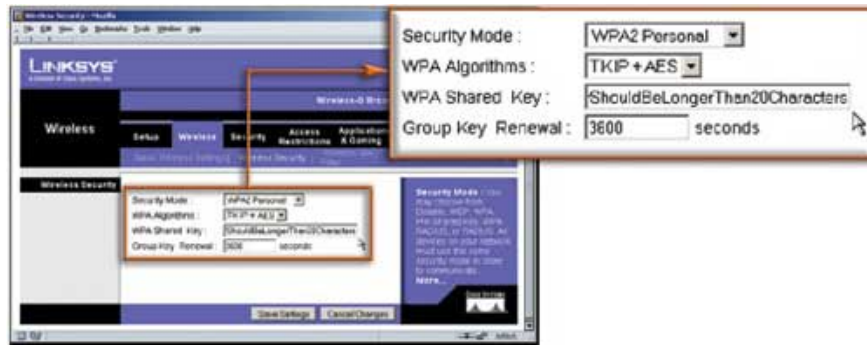


Figure 1 : Setting up WPA2 security for router / gateway.

AUTOMATIC SECURITY

Although Windows 2000 and earlier versions of Windows do not support WPA2 security, you can still secure your wireless network with help from some useful tools.



Figure 2 : Secure your wireless network with McAfee's Wireless Home Network Security utility.

McAfee Wireless Home Network Security (\$ 80) is software that can configure Wi-Fi security for multiple wireless gateways and supports up to three network networks (Figure 2). The company lists the devices it supports at www.mcafee.com/router. Although WPA2 is not yet supported, this software can overcome some of the disadvantages of the WPA standard (such as using a static key, which makes it easier to crack). The program automatically generates and rotates through new keys on any computer on the network and on the gateway itself.

In addition, another way to check the security of wireless networks is to use Marius Milner's free Netstumbler utility. Netstumbler not only helps you identify security "holes" on the network but also detects the source of the interference as well as identifies areas with weak signal.

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