IEEE P802.11  
Wireless LANs

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| HPKE Protected SAE Password Identifiers for Privacy | | | | |
| Date: 2023-07-12 | | | | |
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Abstract

This submission proposes a way to provide privacy protections to SAE password identifiers.

This version is a minimal variant based on 23/44r8 with the opportunistic option removed. In addition, some of the edits were updated to be on top of REVme/D3.0. There are also clarifying changes to cover unpadding of the unwrapped protected password identifier.

This proposes resolution for CID 4026 and CID 4072.

SAE password identifiers allow an ESS (identified by a single SSID) to support multiple passwords for access. A password identifier maps to one, and only one, password. Passwords and their identifiers can be given out on a per-STA basis or to a group of STAs that share common access permissions. It is possible to assign authorization policy—VLAN, ACLs, etc—to users based on the password they used when authenticating.

Vendors have done similar per-user credential schemes with PSK mode. These schemes suffer from supporting a limited number of unique credentials and requirements for the AP to do a considerable amount of work to support the scheme. In spite of that, they are still popular. But these schemes do not work with SAE due to the forward secrecy properties of SAE. Password identifiers are the way to provide support for this use case with the enhanced security that SAE provides.

Unfortunately, SAE password identifiers are passed in the clear. This has brought up privacy concerns and an unwillingness to deploy SAE password identifiers in spite of them being extremely useful and solving legitimate use cases. This is causing a reluctance in certain markets to adopt stronger SAE authentication in favour of insecure PSK authentication in order to maintain the per-user credential capability. This also creates friction when stronger SAE authentication is being mandated for certain bands because this use case cannot be supported without password identifiers.

To address privacy concerns, it is proposed to use HPKE (RFC 9810) to wrap a plaintext password identifier in a public key of the AP or mesh peer.

This scheme has the following security properties:

* An attacker cannot determine a protected identity;
* An attacker cannot connect protected identities across distinct SAE protocol runs;
* Password identifiers can be arbitrarily padded to foil passive traffic analysis;
* Protected identities are secure under a security bounds of the elliptic curve and AEAD cipher used in HPKE;
* An attacker cannot tamper with or substitute identifiers to connect distinct runs of SAE;
* An AP needs to only manage a single credential;
* Identities are protected against members of the same group;
* Protected password identifiers in a mesh is supported.

**CID 4026**

12.4.3, P 2810

Comment: Password identifiers are sent in the clear during an SAE exchange. Password identifiers constitute Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and this is a privacy violation. SAE password identifiers must be protected against exposure to unauthorized entities.

Proposed Change: Come up with a scheme to provide privacy protection to SAE password identifiers which scales from small home networks to large enterprise networks and that does not impose an onerous burden on either the STA or APs in the ESS.

Proposed Resolution: REVISED. Incorporate changes in <this document>.

**CID 4072**

12.4.3, P 2810 L 11

Comment: With PSK-based AKMs getting disallowed for newer MAC/PHY additions with SAE being used as the replacement, it is important for there to be a SAE-based mechanism that can be deployed with similar capabilities that are used with PSK. While other cases have been covered in practice, support for multiple passwords has failed to gain any real deployment. REVme does include a mechanism that would allow this to be supported with the SAE password identifiers. However, privacy concerns with the identifier being transmitted without protection has been used as justification to not deploy this. As such, a protected version of SAE password identifier would be of use to make deployment easier.

Proposed Change: Incorporate changes proposed in https://mentor.ieee.org/802.11/dcn/23/11-23-0044-06-000m-hpke-protected-password-identifiers.docx. Since there has been some objection to that exact set of changes, this comment could be satisfied with a modified design, e.g., by only allowing the pre-configured AP public key case and removing the opportunistic option, if that would gain more support in the group.

Proposed Resolution: REVISED. Incorporate changes in <this document>.

The proposal can be implemented by accepting the following changes to IEEE P802.11-REVme/D3.0:

*Add the following to Clause 2:*

IETF RFC 9180, Hybrid Public Key Encryption, Feb. 2022.

*Instruct the editor to obtain a number assignment from ANA for <ANA-2> and to modify 9.3.3.11 as indicated:*

**9.3.3.11 Authentication frame format**

**Table 9-68—Authentication frame body**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Order** | **Information** | **Notes** |
| 21 | Password Identifier | The Password Identifier element is optionally present in certain Authentication frames as defined in Table 9-69 (Presence of fields and elements in Authentication frames) |
| 22 | Rejected Groups | The Rejected Groups element is present only in certain Authentication frames as defined in Table 9-69 (Presence of fields and elements in Authentication frames). |
| 23 | Anti-Clogging Token Container | The Anti-Clogging Token Container element is present only in certain Authentication frames as defined in Table 9-69 (Presence of fields and elements in Authentication frames). |
| 24 | AKM Suite Selector | The AKM Suite Selector element is present only in certain Authentication frames as defined in Table 9-69 (Presence of fields and elements in Authentication frames). |
| <ANA-2> | Protected Password Identifier | The Protected Password Identifier element is optionally present in Authentication frames as defined in Table 9-69 (Presence of fields and elements in Authentication frames). |
| Last | Vendor Specific | One or more Vendor Specific elements are optionally present. These elements follow all other elements. |

**Table 9-69—Presence of fields and elements in Authentication frames**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Authentication algorithm | Authentication transaction sequence number | Status code | Presence of fields and elements from order 4 onwards |
| SAE | 1 | Any | The Scalar field is present if the Status Code field is zero or 126.  The FFE field is present if the Status Code field is zero or 126.  When the hunting-and-pecking method is used to drive the PWE, the Anti-Clogging Token field is present if the Status Code field is ANTI\_CLOGGING\_TOKEN\_REQUIRED or if the Authentication frame is in response to a previous rejection with the Status Code field equal to ANTI\_CLOGGING\_TOKEN\_REQUIRED.  The Finite Cyclic Group field is present if the Status Code field is zero, ANTI\_CLOGGING\_TOKEN\_REQUIRED, 77, or 126.  The Password Identifier element is optionally present if the Protected Password Identifier element is not present and the Status Code field is zero, 123, or 126.  The Protected Password Identifier element is optionally present if the Password Identifier element is not present and the Status Code field is zero, 123, or 126.  If the Status Code field is 126, the Rejected Groups element is conditionally present as described in 12.4.7.3 (Encoding and decoding of SAE Commit messages); otherwise the Rejected Groups element is not present.  The Rejected Groups element is present if the Status Code field is 126.  When the hash-to-element method is used to derive the PWE, the Anti-Clogging Token Container  element is present if the Status Code field is ANTI\_CLOGGING\_TOKEN\_REQUIRED or if the Authentication frame is in response to a previous rejection with the Status Code field equal to ANTI\_CLOGGING\_TOKEN\_REQUIRED.  If the Status Code field is 126, the Rejected Groups element is conditionally present as described in 12.4.7.3 (Encoding and decoding of SAE Commit messages); otherwise the Rejected Groups element is not present. When the hash-to-element method is used to derive the PWE, the Anti-Clogging Token Container element is present if the Status Code field is ANTI\_CLOGGING\_TOKEN\_REQUIRED or if the Authentication frame is in response to a previous rejection with the Status Code field equal to ANTI\_CLOGGING\_TOKEN\_REQUIRED. (M67)The AKM Suite Selector element is present if 00-0F-AC:24 or 00-0F-AC:25 is the intended AKM (see 12.4.5.3 (Construction of an SAE Commit message) and 12.4.5.4 (Processing of a peer’s SAE Commit message)); otherwise, it is not present. |

*Instruct the editor to obtain an assignment from ANA for <ANA-3>, modify Table 9-78 as indicated, and update the reserved value range:*

**Table 9-78—Status codes**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 129 | TCLAS\_PROCESSING\_TERMINATE  D\_POLICY\_CONFLICT | Requested TCLAS processing has been terminated by the AP due to conflict with higher layer QoS policies. |
| <ANA-3> | BAD\_PROTECTED\_IDENTITY | The SAE protected password identifier in the SAE Commit message was invalid. |
| 130-65 535 |  | Reserved |

*Instruct the editor to modify Table 9-128 as indicated, obtain an assignment from ANA for <ANA-5>.*

**9.4.2 Elements**

**9.4.2.1 General**

**Table 9-128—Element IDs**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Element** | **Element ID** | **Element ID Extension** | **Extensible** | **Fragmentable** |
| Originator Preferred MCS (see 9.4.2.297 (Originator Preferred MCS element | 255 | 116 | Yes | No |
| Protected Password Identifier (see 9.4.2.X (Protected Password Identifier)) | 255 | <ANA-5> | No | No |
| Reserved | 255 | <ANA-5> + 1-255 |  |  |

*Instruct the editor to create a new subclause as below, replacing X with the appropriate number and assigning the figure numbers appropriately:*

**9.4.2.X Protected Password Identifier element**

The Protected Password Identifier element is used to convey a password identifier during an authentication exchange in a manner that will hide the actual identifier from attackers. The format of the Protected Password Identifier element is shown in Figure 9-XYZ (Protected Password Identifier element format).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Element ID | Length | Element ID  Extension | Protected Identifier |

Octets: 1 1 1 variable

**Figure 9-XYZ—Protected Password Identifier element format**

The Element ID, Length, and Element ID Extension fields are defined in 9.4.2.1 (General).

The Protected Identifier field contains an opaque octet string.

*Modify 12.4.1 (P2809 L16) as indicated:*

**12.4.1 SAE Overview**

...

The parties involved are called STA-A and STA-B. They are identified by their MAC addresses, STA-A-MAC

and STA-B-MAC, respectively. STAs begin the protocol when they discover a peer by receiving Beacon or Probe Response frame(s), or when they receive an Authentication frame indicating SAE authentication from

a peer.

SAE supports the use of password identifiers to enable groupings of STAs under a single password or for unique, per-STA assignment of passwords, all under a single SSID. There is a 1:1 mapping of password identifier to password. For privacy, password identifiers can be protected using the public key of an AP or mesh STA. Public keys are preprovisioned with the password and password identifier. Public keys and the groups from which they are created are stored in dot11RSNAConfigPasswordPeerPubKey and dot11RSNAConfigPasswordPubKeyGrp, respectively.

SAE is an RSNA authentication protocol and is selected according to 12.6.2 (RSNA selection).

*Modify 12.4.3 (title and P2810 L26) as indicated:*

**12.4.3 Representation of passwords and password identifiers**

...

In an infrastructure BSS for which an SAE AKM is indicated, the AP shall set the SAE Password Identifiers In Use subfield of the Extended Capabilities field of the Extended Capabilities element to 1 if any entry in the dot11RSNAConfigPasswordValueTable has a non-NULL dot11RSNAConfigPasswordIdentifier, and shall set it to 0 otherwise. Similarly, an AP shall set the SAE Password Identifiers Used Exclusively subfield of the Extended Capabilities field of the Extended Capabilities element to 1 if every entry in the dot11RSNAConfigPasswordValueTable has a non-NULL dot11RSNAConfigPasswordIdentifier and shall set it to 0 otherwise.

SAE password identifiers can expose information that a passive attacker could use to identify and track STAs that authenticate to a network. In order to provide privacy, protected password identifiers can be used by STAs. Protected password identifiers appear as opaque strings when passed in SAE Commit messages and are parsed and understood by APs and mesh STAs that are in the possession of the private key that corresponds to the public key. APs in an ESS can share the same public key. The method by which the public key is shared by APs in an ESS is out of scope of this standard.

A STA protects SAE password identifiers by first obtaining the public key of an AP or peer mesh STA. If there is a public key in dot11RSNAConfigPasswordPeerPubKey, the STA uses that value as the x-coordinate of an elliptic curve defined by dot11RSNAConfigPasswordPubKeyGrp. It then uses the equation of the defined curve to produce a y-coordinate (the sign does not matter) and reconstruct a point on the elliptic curve. Finally, it uses the public key to wrap its password identifier using HPKE (IETF RFC 9180) in the “single shot” mode of encryption to a public key. The AAD used in the HPKE operation shall be the scalar field from the SAE Commit message in which the protected password identifier is to be inserted.

Prior to wrapping, the password identifier shall be padded. The padding consists of a single octet indicating the number of random octets that follow, followed by that number of octets. The pad length indicator and the pad together shall be prepended to the password identifier. This padded password identifier is used as the plaintext to the HPKE wrapping. STAs should vary the amount of padding used to thwart traffic analysis. Padding, exclusive of the pad length identifier, should not be more than 16 octets and may be zero (i.e. the padding consists of a single octet whose value is zero).The output of HPKE shall become the Protected Identifier field of the Protected Password Identifier element and added to the SAE Commit message to which it is bound.

STAs that support protected password identities shall support the following options from IETF RFC 9180:

* KEMs using NIST p-256, with both compressed and uncompressed outputs
* KDF using SHA-256
* AEAD function of AES-GCM-128

STAs should use cryptographic primitives with HPKE that are commensurate with the primitives being used with SAE (see Table 12-1).An AP or peer mesh STA that receives a Protected Password Identifier element in an SAE Commit message shall unwrap it using HPKE in the “single shot” mode of decryption to its public key. The AAD used in the HPKE operation shall be the scalar field of the SAE Commit message. Failure of HPKE unwrapping shall result in an authentication failure. The first octet of the output of HPKE indicates the amount of padding that follows and this octet and the corresponding padding octets shall be removed, leaving the plaintext password identifier used to complete the SAE protocol.

*Modify 12.4.4.2.3 (P2814 LL62) as indicated:*

**12.4.4.2.3 Hash-to-element generation of the password element with ECC groups**

**...**

The SSWU method produces two values, x1, and x2, at least one of which will represent an abscissa of a point on the curve. If x1 is the abscissa, then x1 becomes the x-coordinate otherwise x2 becomes the x-coordinate. The equation of the curve with the x-coordinate produces the square of the y-coordinate which is recovered by taking the square root. The two possible results of the square root are discriminated by checking its least significant bit with the least significant bit of u. The result is a point on the curve.

The *identifier* used in the calculations above shall be the value extracted from the SAE Commit message. If protected password identifiers are used, the identifier in the calculations above shall be the plaintext password identifier that was wrapped to or unwrapped from the Protected Identifier field of the Protected Password Identifier element, otherwise it shall be the value from the Identifier field of the Password Identifier element.

...

*Modify 12.4.4.3.3 as indicated where the deleted duplicative text occurs immediately before a formula for calculation of PT (formula in between the text is not shown) at P2818 L22:*

**12.4.4.3.3 Direct generation of the password element with FFC groups**

This secret PT is stored until needed to generate a session specific PWE (see 12.4.5.2 (PWE and secret generation)).

The *identifier* used in the calculations above shall be the value extracted from the SAE Commit message. If protected password identifiers are used, the identifier in the calculations above shall be the plaintext password identifier that was wrapped to or unwrapped from the Protected Identifier field of the Protected Password Identifier element, otherwise it shall be the value from the Identifier field of the Password Identifier element.

*Modify 12.4.5.3 (P2819 L65) as indicated:*

**12.4.5.3 Construction of an SAE Commit message**

...

This message shall be transmitted to the peer as described in 12.4.7 (Framing of SAE). The temporary secret *mask* may be deleted at this point.

If a STA possesses the public key of the SAE peer (either an AP or peer mesh STA) and has a password identifier, it shall wrap the password identifier according to 12.4.3 and shall add the Protected Password Identifier element to its SAE Commit message. If a STA does not possess the public key of the SAE peer but does have a password identifier, the STA may refuse to connect to the peer using its password identifier (and password assigned to it) or may forgo the benefits of privacy and pass the password identifier in the clear by adding a Password Identifier element to its SAE Commit message.

To derive keys for use with AKM 00-0F-AC:24 or AKM 00-0F-AC:25, an AKM Suite Selector element indicating 00-0F-AC:24 or 00-0F-AC:25 shall be included in an SAE Commit message transmitted to the peer.

*Modify 12.4.5.4 as indicated:*

**12.4.5.4 Processing of a peer’s SAE Commit message**

If the peer’s SAE Commit message contains a password identifier, the value of that identifier shall be used in construction of the password element (PWE) for this exchange. If the peer’s SAE Commit message contains a protected password identifier, the corresponding plaintext password identifier shall be used in construction of the secret element PT for this exchange (see 12.4.4.2.3 (Hash-to-element generation of the password element with ECC groups) and 12.4.4.3.3 (Direct generation of the password element with FFC groups). If a password identifier, or protected password identifier, is present in the peer’s SAE Commit message and there is no password with the given (decrypted, if protected) identifier a STA shall fail authentication. If a protected password identifier cannot be processed (see 12.4.3) the STA shall respond with an SAE Commit message with a status code of BAD\_PROTECTED\_IDENTITY and fail authentication.

NOTE—SAE Commit messages are unprotected and forgeable. A STA that receives an SAE Commit message with a status code of BAD\_PROTECTED\_IDENTITY might attempt additional authentication attempts before abandoning the exchange, and might elect to connect using an unprotected password identifier.

*Modify 12.4.8.6.3 as indicated:*

**12.4.8.6.3 Protocol instance behavior—Nothing state**

Upon receipt of a Com event, the protocol instance shall check the Status of the Authentication frame.

* If the Status code is not SUCCESS or SAE\_HASH\_TO\_ELEMENT, the frame shall be silently discarded and a *Del* event shall be sent to the parent process.
* Otherwise, the password identifier or protected password identifier, if any, shall be checked:
  + If a password identifier is present and no password is associated with that identifier, the protocol instance shall set *BadID* and construct and transmit an SAE Authentication frame with status code UNKNOWN\_PASSWORD\_IDENTIFIER, and a *Del* event shall be sent to the parent process. If a protected password identifier is present it shall be unwrapped and unpadded. If unwrapping or unpadding fails, the protocol instance shall set *BadID*, construct and transmit an Authentication frame with status code BAD\_PROTECTED\_IDENTIFIER, and send a *Del* event to the parent process. If unwrapping succeeds, the unwrapped and unpadded data becomes the password identifier for this transaction. If no password is associated with that identifier, the protocol instance shall set *BadID*, construct and transmit an SAE Authentication frame with status code UNKNOWN\_PASSWORD\_IDENTIFIER, and send a *Del* event to the parent process.

*Modify 12.4.8.6.4 as indicated (P2831 L64):*

**12.4.8.6.4 Protocol instance behavior—Committed state**

* If there is a password identifier associated with the password when the protocol instance constructed its SAE Commit message and either there is no password identifier in the received frame or the password identifier in the received frame does not match the password identifier used to construct the protocol instance’s SAE Commit message, the protocol instance shall set *BadID*, send a *Del* event to the parent process, and transition back to Nothing state. If a protected password identifier was included in its SAE Commit message and either there is no protected password identifier in the received SAE Commit message or the protected password identifier differs from that used to construct the protocol instance’s SAE Commit message, the protocol instance shall set *BadID*, send a *Del* event to the parent process, and transition back to *Nothing* state.

*Modify C.3 (P5185 L50) as indicated:*

**C.3 MIB detail**

Dot11RSNAConfigPasswordValueEntry ::=

SEQUENCE {

dot11RSNAConfigPasswordValueIndex Unsigned32,

dot11RSNAConfigPasswordCredential OCTET STRING,

dot11RSNAConfigPasswordIdentifier OCTET STRING,

dot11RSNAConfigPasswordPeerMac MacAddress

dot11RSNAConfigPasswordPeerPubKey OCTET STRING

dot11RSNAConfigPasswordPubKeyGrp INTEGER }

dot11RSNAConfigPasswordPeerMac OBJECT-TYPE

SYNTAX MacAddress

MAX-ACCESS read-write

STATUS current

DESCRIPTION

"This is a control variable.

It is written by an external management entity.

Changes take effect as soon as practical in the implementation.

This variable represents the MAC address of the peer

that is to be authenticated. A wildcard BSSID is

permitted when passwords are shared among peers or

when password identifiers are used to identify the password.”

::= { dot11RSNAConfigPasswordValueEntry 4}

dot11RSNAConfigPasswordPeerPubKey OBJECT-TYPE

SYNTAX OCTET STRING

MAX-ACCESS read-write

STATUS current

DESCRIPTION

“This is a control variable.

It is written by an external management entity.

Changes take effect as soon as practical in the implementation.

This variable represents the x-coordinate of a public key as

output by the integer to octet string procedure.”

REFERENCE “IEEE Std 802.11-2020, 12.4.7.2.2”

:: = { dot11RSNAConfigPasswordValueEntry 5}

dot11RSNAConfigPasswordPubKeyGrp OBJECT-TYPE

SYNTAX Unsigned32 (0..65535)

MAX-ACCESS read-write

STATUS current

DESCRIPTION

“This is a control variable.

It is written by an external management entity.

Changes take effect as soon as practical in the implementation.

This variable refers to a finite cyclic group from an

IANA-maintained registry for IKE (IETF RFC 2409).”

:: = {dot11RSNAConfigPasswordValueEntry 6}