

Why does Windows/Internet Explorer create all those entries anyway?

As of the introduction of Windows XP, the primary application that uses the Protected Storage is Internet Explorer (IE). If you have IE save the information you type into web pages, then you have "Auto Complete" enabled. IE stores your personal information that you've entered into web pages in the protected storage. Not only does this include things like your name, address, phone numbers and e-mail addresses. It can also include still more supposedly "confidential" information such as your account numbers, user IDs and passwords, and things such as your Social Security Number (in the US) or similar government/tax ID (in other countries). And perhaps even more surprisingly, it doesn't make any difference if you entered this information into a web page on a secure web page or not.

The amount of information stored in the protected storage area depends on a number of factors, including:

- The version of Windows (and Internet Explorer) that you have installed.
- Whether you use, or have used, Internet Explorer.
- Whether you use Internet Explorer's Auto Complete feature.
- Whether you have Internet Explorer save web site passwords.
- What other applications you use that also make use of the protected storage. As of this writing, applications that use protected storage seem to be limited to other Microsoft applications. Over time, other third-party applications may begin to make use of the protected storage.

Private Eye exposes the information stored by all applications, not just Internet Explorer.