Issues With Using Browser Password Management

The Problem:

We all have done at one time or another. We visit a website that requires log in. We enter our username and password. Then, the browser asks us if we want to store our credentials for later. It's a convenience, we tell ourselves. Browsers are safe for this kind of storage, right?

Unfortunately, this tale is told way too often. The sad truth is that no, browsers are NOT safe for storing user credentials. Browsers do a lousy job of safeguarding your sensitive information (passwords, credit card numbers, etc).

Web browsers are fairly easy to break into and lots of malware, browser extensions and even honest software can extract this information. Worse still, if your computer is compromised with remote access and control software, the controller can visit any site you saved your passwords for and access that information. Hopefully you are not storing your on-line banking credentials in your browser…

The Solution

In Your Browser, Turn off "Offer to Save Passwords":

Stop saving passwords in your browser. Find your browser in the list below and follow the steps to prevent your browser from offering to store your passwords:

Brave: Settings > Advanced > Autofill. Toggle off "Offer to save passwords."

Chrome: Settings > Autofill. Toggle off "Offer to save passwords."

Edge: Settings > Profiles > Passwords. Toggle off "Offer to save passwords."

Firefox: Settings > Privacy & Security. Scroll down to Logins and Passwords and uncheck "Ask to save logins and passwords for websites."

Firefox also gives you the option of designating websites for which the passwords will never be saved.

Opera: Settings > Advanced Settings > Autofill > Passwords. Toggle off "Offer to save passwords."

Safari doesn't have a specific setting to stop password saving, but it will stop asking if you take the steps found in the next section.

In your Browser, Disable Autofill:

Brave: Settings > Advanced > Autofill. Toggle off "Auto Sign-in."

Chrome: Settings > Autofill. Toggle off "Auto Sign-in."

Edge: Settings > Profiles > Passwords. Edge won't let you turn off autofill, but it lets you choose whether to automatically fill in passwords or to first prompt you for the device password (your Windows account login) before autofilling. If you select the latter option, you can further choose whether to always ask for the device password or to ask only once per browsing session.

Firefox: Settings > Privacy & Security. Scroll down to Logins and Passwords and uncheck "Autofill logins and passwords."

Opera: Settings > Advanced Settings > Autofill > Passwords. Toggle off "Auto Sign-in."

Safari: Safari (in menu bar) > Preferences > select Autofill tab. Uncheck "User names and passwords" and "Credit cards." You can also go to Preferences > select Passwords tab and uncheck "AutoFill usernames and passwords," but that won't affect saved credit-card numbers.

In Your Browser, Export Browser Passwords:

You can use these steps to retrieve your passwords from your browser. Browsers will typically export the information to a comma-separated-values (CSV) file.

Brave: Settings > Advanced > Autofill. Click the three stacked dots opposite "Saved Passwords," then select "Export passwords."

Chrome: Settings > Autofill. Click the three stacked dots opposite "Saved Passwords," then select "Export passwords."

Edge: Settings > Profiles > Passwords. Click the three horizontal dots opposite "Saved passwords," then select "Export passwords."

Firefox: Settings > Privacy & Security. Scroll down to Logins and Passwords and click "Saved Logins." You'll be taken to a new tab entitled "Firefox Lockwise" that will list all your saved passwords. In the upper right of the tab, click the three horizontal dots and select "Export Logins."

Opera: Settings > Advanced Settings > Autofill > Passwords. Click the three horizontal dots opposite "Saved passwords," then select "Export passwords."

Safari: File > Export > Passwords, then click "Export Passwords." You'll have to enter the password you use to log into the Mac to save the CSV file. (Note: This works only on macOS Catalina 10.15 and later.)

In Your Browser, Clear The Passwords from Your Browser:

Finally, you'll want to delete the passwords saved in your web browser.

Brave: Settings > Advanced > Autofill. Click the three stacked dots next to each password entry, then select "Remove."

Chrome: Settings > Autofill. Click the three stacked dots next to each password entry, then select "Remove."

Edge: Settings > Profiles > Passwords. Click the three stacked dots next to each password entry, then select "Remove."

Firefox: Settings > Privacy & Security. Scroll down to Logins and Passwords and click "Saved Logins." You'll be taken to a new tab entitled "Firefox Lockwise" that will list all your saved passwords. In the upper right of the tab, click the three horizontal dots and select "Remove All Logins."

If you'd rather remove only some passwords in Firefox and keep others, you can select each entry individually in the left-hand navigation column on the Firefox Lockwise page, then click "Remove" in the upper-right part of the entry displayed in the main part of the page.

Opera: Settings > Advanced Settings > Autofill > Passwords. Click the three stacked dots next to each password entry, then select "Remove."

Safari: Safari (in menu bar) > Preferences > select Passwords tab. You'll have to enter your macOS password or use Touch ID to see the contents of the tab. Once you do, you can select each password entry individually, or shift-click to select multiple entries. Then click "Remove" at the bottom left of the window.

It might be OK to let your browser remember some passwords, such as those for websites that do not contain financial information or other sensitive data. Ones to definitely remove are those that access financial data, social media or web mail accounts.

Summary

Storing passwords in your browser may save you time now. But the amount of time, effort, and aggravation you will face in the event this information is compromised far exceeds any time saving up front.

Good password management is one of the most important aspects of being #CyberSmart. Treat yourself to some peace of mind this October. Remember, Cybersecurity is everyone's' responsibility!