Data Protection is People Protection

MERCY CORPS

DATA PROTECTION & PRIVACY GUIDE:

Encrypting a File

This section addresses a basic example of encrypting a file using a Microsoft feature available on Mercy Corps computers. There are a range of factors to consider when encrypting a file, but here we focus on using a password and encryption of a single file. See the links below for resources that explore encryption in more depth. For this guide, however, it is useful to understand the subtle difference between "password protection" and "encryption".

Think of password protection as a box with a lock on it. When you “password protect” your document, you are putting it in an electronic box and locking it with a password: only those with the password can open the box. However, if the password you choose is not very strong, or if it is shared with the wrong person, someone can easily get into the box and view your document! By contrast, encryption uses complex algorithms to encode information, which requires having a key to decrypt that information. Think of this as taking your document and running it through a paper shredder that assigns a special key to put the document back together again.

When you combine password protection and encryption, you are effectively doubling your protection. If someone successfully breaks the password to the electronic box, they will only be able to see the bits of shredded paper without also having the proper key. All Mercy Corps’ laptops are encrypted using Microsoft BitLocker. This prevents a Mercy Corps laptop’s hard disk from being removed and accessed on another computer.

☆ Importance

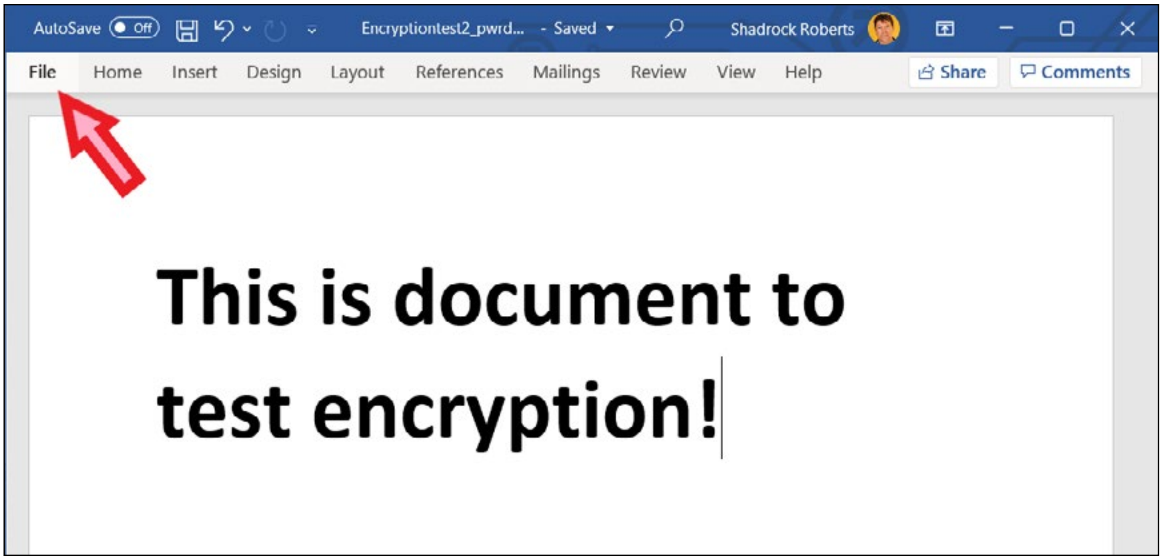
Encryption is critical because it helps ensure the privacy and security of information. Without encryption, data can be intercepted and read by anyone who has access to it. When considering whether or not to encrypt data, ask yourself, “What is the risk to Mercy Corps’ program participants, staff, and partners if these data were lost or stolen?” A good rule of thumb is to encrypt anything containing personally identifiable or sensitive information.

Principles

- Use approved Mercy Corps systems for encrypted data transfer and storage (e.g. Microsoft SharePoint or Google Drive). When in doubt, ask your local IT team for advice.
- Encrypt sensitive data at all stages of its collection, use, transmission, and storage.
- Use strong passwords and do not reuse passwords. Lists of passwords circulate online and make it easier for someone with one of your passwords to access more than one of your accounts or files! You may want to use a password manager, such as Lastpass. However, password managers may be vulnerable to cyber attack by fake apps, so it is critical that password managers are used as part of a broader approach to securing data.
- In a team environment, encryption is only as good as the weakest link. If even one person fails to use encryption, your program data is at risk. It is extremely important to communicate this to your team: encryption is not just an issue of technology, but of behavior change as well.
- Understand laws that govern encryption in your country. Local laws in a number of countries (such as Sudan, Yemen and Pakistan) place limits on encryption software. When in doubt, ask your local IT team for advice: in general they will work with you to ensure that your computers’ hard drive is appropriately encrypted using Intune.

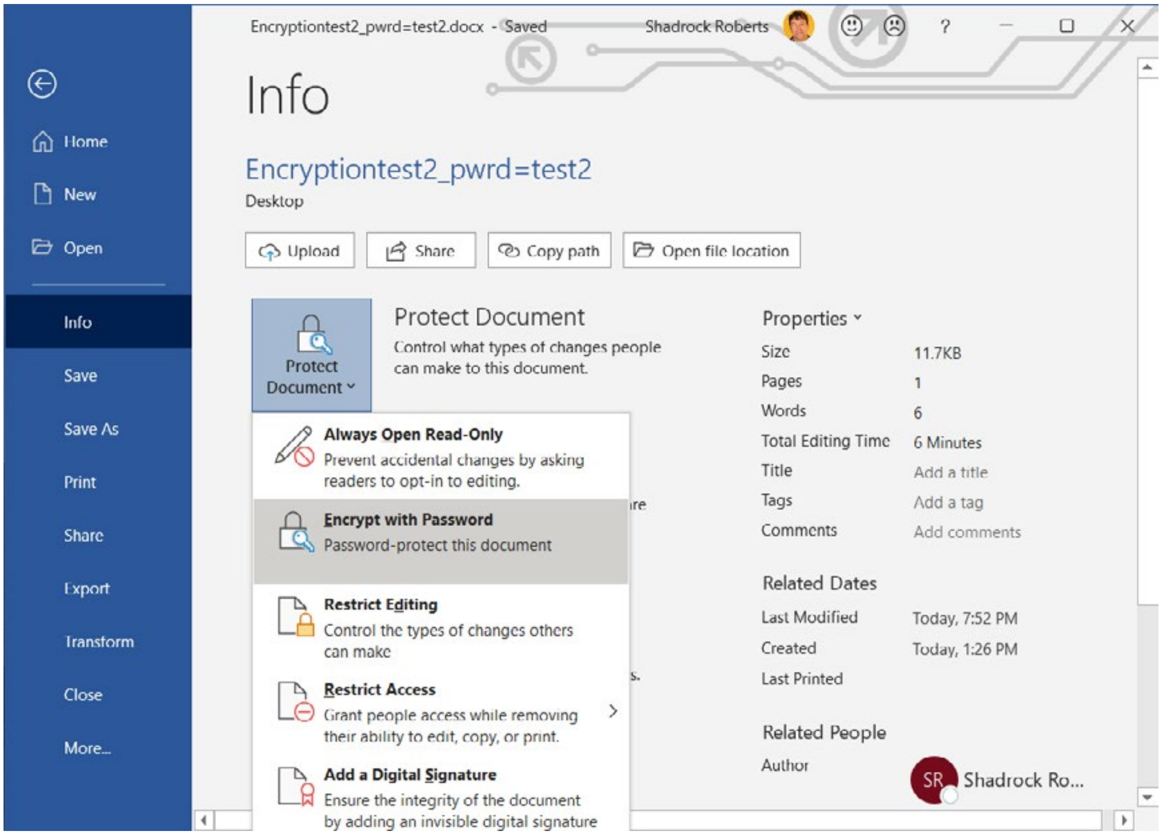
Instructions

1 Open the Word, Excel, or PowerPoint file you want to encrypt and select the **File** menu.



This is document to test encryption!

2 Navigate to **Info** > **Protect Document** > **Encrypt with Password**.



Encryptiontest2_pwrd=test2

Desktop

Protect Document

Control what types of changes people can make to this document.

Always Open Read-Only
Prevent accidental changes by asking readers to opt-in to editing.

Encrypt with Password
Password-protect this document

Restrict Editing
Control the types of changes others can make

Restrict Access
Grant people access while removing their ability to edit, copy, or print.

Add a Digital Signature
Ensure the integrity of the document by adding an invisible digital signature

Properties

Size	11.7KB
Pages	1
Words	6
Total Editing Time	6 Minutes
Title	Add a title
Tags	Add a tag
Comments	Add comments

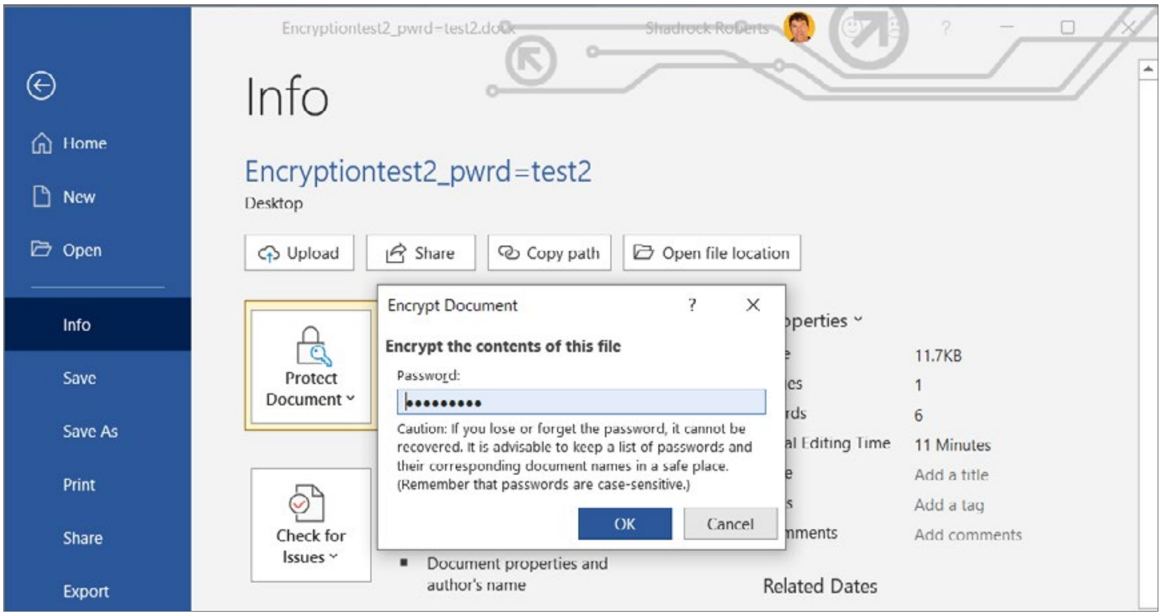
Related Dates

Last Modified	Today, 7:52 PM
Created	Today, 1:26 PM
Last Printed	

Related People

Author	SR Shadrock Ro...

3 Type a password, click **OK** then type it again to confirm it.



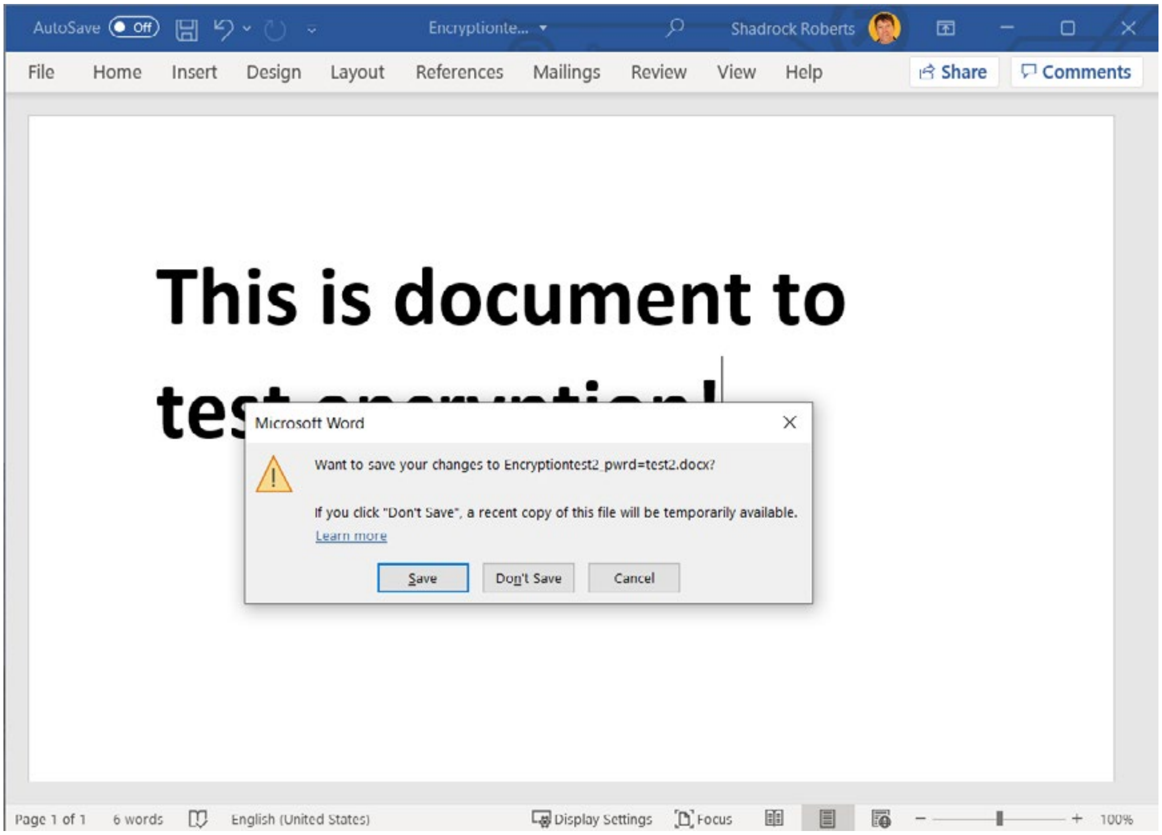
Encrypt Document

Encrypt the contents of this file

Password: ●●●●●●●●●

Caution: If you lose or forget the password, it cannot be recovered. It is advisable to keep a list of passwords and their corresponding document names in a safe place. (Remember that passwords are case-sensitive.)

4 Save the file to make sure the password takes effect.



This is document to tes

Microsoft Word

Want to save your changes to Encryptiontest2_pwrd=test2.docx?

If you click "Don't Save", a recent copy of this file will be temporarily available. Learn more

Now you can share the file and the password with those who require access. It is best practice to place the file on a Mercy Corps approved cloud service such as G Suite or SharePoint. Remember to send the file link and password links separately. For example, you could share the file using Google Drive (**see the File Sharing section**) and generate a notice that the file has been shared via Google, then share the password via an email to a colleague.

Further Assistance

- The Electronic Cash Transfer Learning Action Network's Data Starter Kit provides a tip sheet for encryption (see Tip sheet #5).
- The Electronic Frontier Foundation provides a more detailed look at various forms of encryption.
- The Engine Room's Hand-Book of the Modern Development Specialist includes a section on Managing Data that provides additional, high-level, thoughts on encryption.

CONTACT

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About Mercy Corps
Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action—helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.

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