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To: Cisco North America Utility Customers

The purpose of this letter is to provide information to Cisco's utility customers regarding password security features contained with Cisco's routers and switches running the IOS operating system.

With the shipping versions of Cisco IOS as of the current date, the native capabilities allow for encrypting the password as well as specifying a minimum length. There is at this time no ability within IOS, by itself, to enforce strong password definition requiring the use of upper and lowercase characters as well as symbols or numbers, nor is there a capability to force password changes on a time-based schedule.

For secure access to Cisco routers and switches where strong password enforcement and/or time-based password changes are a requirement, an alternative that the customer may consider is the use of TACACS+ or RADIUS in conjunction with an LDAP directory or One Time Password (OTP) solution. Cisco Secure Access Control System has been deployed in customer networks today as a TACACS+/RADIUS server providing strong authentication for Cisco IOS devices. The local password defined on the Cisco router and switch is used only in the event that the TACACS+/RADIUS server is unavailable. Hence, if deployed in a redundant fashion, the local password should never be required. The manual definition of a strong, local password should only be created/changed by authorized personnel.

It is the responsibility of the customer to verify that the potential solution is appropriate for their needs. Please note that the statements in this letter are merely intended to provide information regarding the features of Cisco's products, and do not constitute any warranty or binding obligation. Any such binding obligation will be contained in a mutually acceptable written agreement between the parties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Ipsen".

Laura Ipsen
GM/SVP
Smart Grid Business Unit

