

20 November 2007

By: Ionut Ilascu, Editor, Software Reviews



File Protector

## [Drive Access Restriction](#)

*Files, folders, drives, they are all secured*

Almost all the work you do today is computer assisted and like it or not, the success of your efforts depends on the integrity of the data the machine stores. Protecting the files and folders can sometimes be a tough job and for some users it takes a painstaking effort to secure important information. I have seen all sorts of methods of keeping important data on the computer as far from prying eyes as possible. From burying deep on the hard drive to changing its attribute to "Hidden", all methods had a flaw. Statistics show that the best way to keep your files safe is encrypting them. The method is not infallible but it takes quite some time for a successful decryption and the trespasser may give up this effort sooner than s/he thinks. Of course, tougher encryption and strong passwords make the breaking more difficult. The Internet provides myriads of softwares ready to assist you into this endeavor and properly secure your files. Some of them come for free and do excellent work. [TrueCrypt](#) is my favorite as it is the most complete file encryption freeware I've seen so far. New solutions constantly make their way on user's computers at different prices. File Protector (the name says it all about its purpose) has a \$29.95 price tag with it and a bunch of useful options for securing important data on your computer, regardless of its type. It can ensure the protection of both individual files and folders as well as of an entire drive restricting the access to them. And more, it also provides encryption options for files. Trial version includes only 15 uses of the application, but trust me, it is more than enough to properly test all its features. There are no other restrictions and the user-friendly interface makes all options easy to access and use. File Protector settings are protected by a password which you are required to enter at each launch of the program. A side panel with dockable menus shelters all options available in the software. Toolbar adds to application's functionality completing its list of features. The basic purpose of File Protector is to restrict access to the files, folders or drives it protects. And it does a very good job. Additional functionality is given by its ability to encrypt files using AES standard with 128, 192 or 256 key sizes. All operations are simple and require minimum effort from the user. Simply choose the type of storage container (file, folder or drive) you want to secure, browse to the desired location (where possible) and the software will do the rest. Protected Folder panel, which takes the most part of the interface, displays all the items under the "wing" of File Protector. These can be easily managed (locked, unlocked, protection lifted) by using the options available in both Toolbar and the left hand side panel. The application is flexible enough to permit multiple selection for a swifter operation of the files. There are no context menu settings and everything is managed only via the alternatives visible in the interface. Once a file, folder or drive are locked with File Protector none of them are accessible to the user. You are not asked for a password to unlock them and what makes the application great is that at attempting access to secured data you will be returned a system error message. Drives cannot be tampered with in any way. We tried formatting it with absolutely no success, so your files are safe with this option. With folder locking however, there is one issue. Indeed, protected folders can be moved, opened, copied or replaced by no means. Nothing can leak out of it, but anything can leak in. A simple drag and drop of any file into a protected folder will copy that file with absolutely no problems. Unless the user is being careful and does not place the important files in a folder inside a directory there is the risk of overwriting. Also, if you lock a folder and then decide to lock the entire drive it is saved on there may be a minor issue when it comes to unlocking. One of these two will be lost on the way. But worry not, the application has a safety net that allows disabling File Protector security for all the files and thus you will have access to any part of the computer. This

happens only if you lock a folder and then the entire drive it is stored on. Encryption capabilities of the application are limited to working files only. The process is simple and painless. All there is to it is choose the location of the file to be encrypted and the output location. Sure you get to define the key size (128, 192 or 256-bit) and apply a password. Both AES key size and password need to be remembered in order to carry on with decrypting the file when time comes. Failing to provide the right settings leads to inability to properly decrypt the file. I must confess that decrypting operation is quite strange as regardless of the encryption key size and password you choose the process will still carry on and only at the end of the operation you will be alerted about the mismatches. It is just as if the authentication is carried out after the decryption of the file. And if you check the output location you will find the result of the decryption (of course, the file is not working). Setting up the application to work in your favor is the easiest thing. There is nothing complicated about the options available and it only takes half a minute. File Protector can run at Windows startup in order to protect your data at all times; Include Subfolder option is tailored for enforcing the lock on all folders on a drive or in a directory. Once closed, only the interface is gone as the software will keep its protection (the process cannot be killed). For making the interface visible again you have to hold down Shift+Ctrl+Alt+F5 (unfortunately the combination cannot be changed). The application protects your files even with system booted in safe mode. When turning off the computer File Protector will display a message alerting you that the files will not be protected. Of course, this happens until the next start of the computer. **The Good** The interface is very user-friendly. All the options are conveniently available in the interface serving application's functions on a platter. It can protect both individual files and folders as well as entire drives. Booting the system in Safe Mode does not lift the protection and secured data will still be inaccessible. File Protector works as long as the computer is on. Once closed, the interface enters hidden mode for non-intruding on the user and it can be brought to screen by means of a key combination. Files can be grouped by categories which can be locked or unlocked. The feature saves lots of time and at the same time offers easy manipulation of the files. **The Bad** Turning on and off DOF (Dynamic Observation File) has little functionality: it only places a message in the title of each window saying "Observed By File Protector". It is just an informative function, but the developer said this will be appended more functionality in the future. Help menu is not explaining how each of the options work thoroughly and it is filled with spelling mistakes. Encryption is limited to files only. **The Truth** Despite all baddies File Protector does a wonderful job with protecting the files folders and drives on your computer. The security is strong and the application is very easy to use. If you reach the use limit while testing the trial mode of the software, worry not as uninstalling it restores everything to the original state (password is required for uninstalling the program). I wish it could create a report with all attempts to open secured files, folders and drives, complete with user, time and date. Anyways, I suggest you give it a try as it is perfect for notebooks and computers with multiple user accounts. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*