



Backing up the enrollment key pair / Firefox cert store – Mozilla Firefox

What is an enrollment key pair?

The certificate enrollment key pair is a critical part of your ACES certificate request. Without the enrollment key pair, the rest of the process won't work. Here's a timeline of what happens to the enrollment key pair during the whole request process:

1. When you use Firefox to request a certificate on our ACES website, our certificate server tells Firefox to create a certificate enrollment key pair. The enrollment key pair isn't a certificate yet, but it's a unique set of data tied to your specific request, and you'll need it later!
2. The enrollment key pair is stored in Firefox's certificate store until you need it. You should back up the Firefox certificate store now (more on that below).
3. When you receive your issuance notification email from us, you'll return to Firefox to import your certificate. Firefox will locate the original enrollment key pair and use it to create your finished certificate.
4. Finally, you'll make a backup copy of the completed certificate. The new backup copy contains your whole certificate, including your enrollment key pair, so you don't need to keep a backup of the Firefox certificate store anymore.

Why should I back up my enrollment key pair?

Since it's stored locally on your computer, in the Firefox certificate store, the enrollment key pair is vulnerable to deletion or corruption by viruses, hardware failures, or even updates to your browser or operating system. If this happens, the *only* way to import your finished certificate is through a backup copy of the Firefox certificate store. We at ORC never have access to your enrollment key pair, so if it's lost and you don't have a backup copy, your only option is to buy a new certificate to replace it.

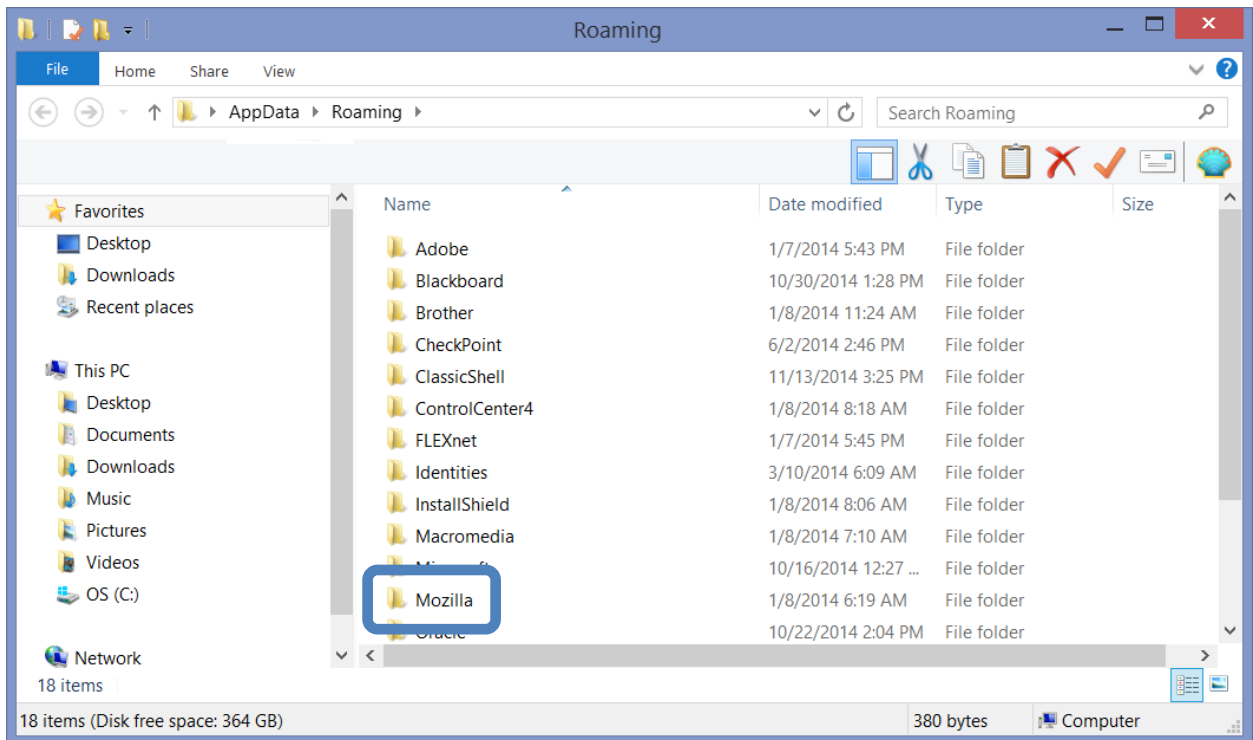
How do I back up my enrollment key pair?

In order to maintain the security of certificates installed in Firefox, the interface to the certificate store limits what we can see and do with certificates in Firefox. The Firefox certificate store is a "black box" to the user; you can't see inside it. You can't see the enrollment key pair or make a direct backup copy of it, but you *can* back up the entire Firefox certificate store. The backup will contain everything hidden in the certificate store, including your enrollment key pairs. The only things that we can see and do are what is allowed in the Firefox user interface.

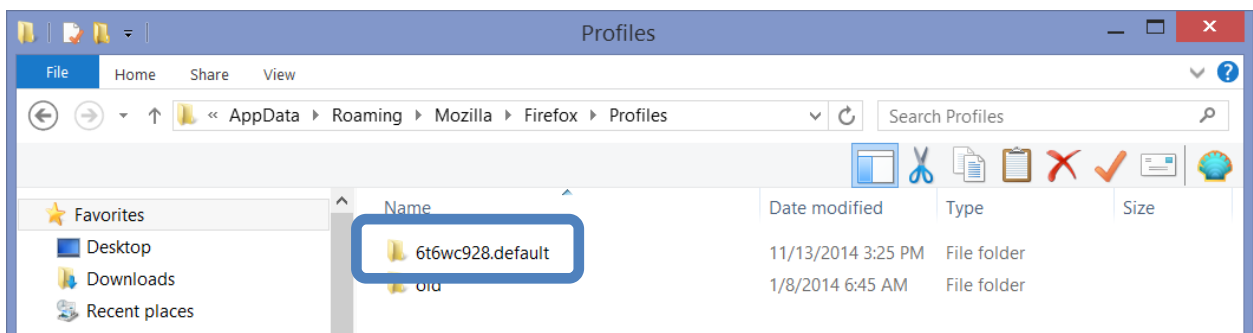
The Firefox certificate store is composed of three files: key3.db, cert8.db, and secmod.db. Copying all three files to a folder will back up the Firefox certificate store. On the next page you'll find the steps you should take to locate and back up the Firefox certificate store.

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1. Open a search box in Windows. In Windows 8, you can do this by tapping **Search** or mousing to the upper-right-hand corner of your screen and clicking the search button. In Windows 7 or XP, the search function is located in the Start menu.
2. Type this into the search box: **%appdata%**
3. Hit enter.
4. Windows File Explorer will open to your application data folder. Find and open the Mozilla folder.

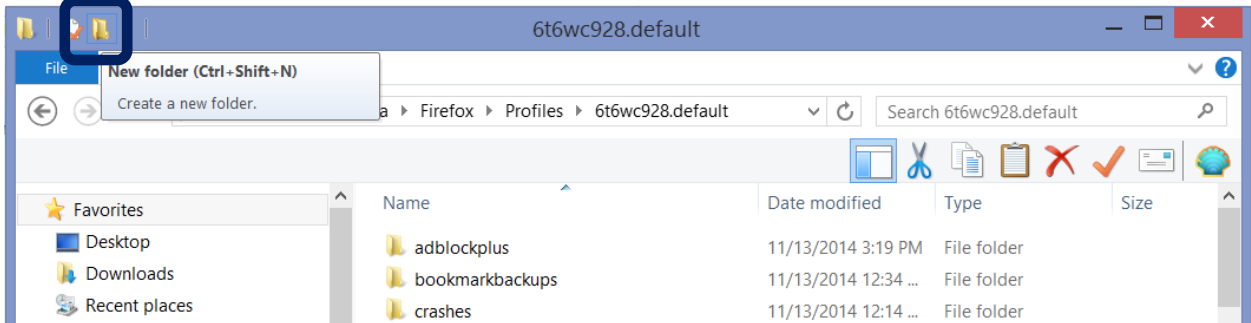


5. Open the Firefox folder, and then open the Profiles folder.
6. You'll see a folder here beginning with a random string of numbers and letters, and ending in **.default**. The name of the folder is different for everyone, so it won't exactly match what you see in the screenshot below. Open the **.default** folder.

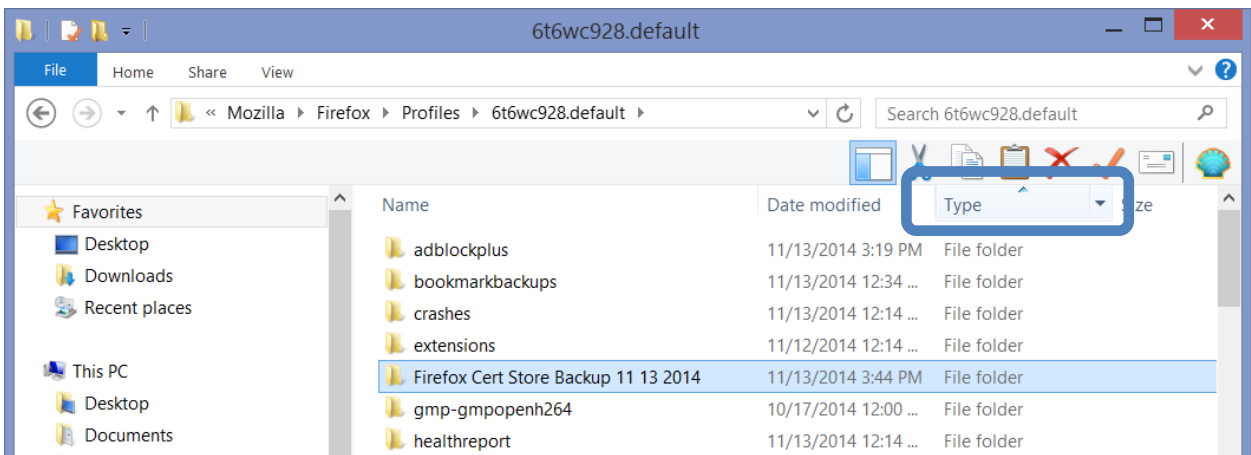


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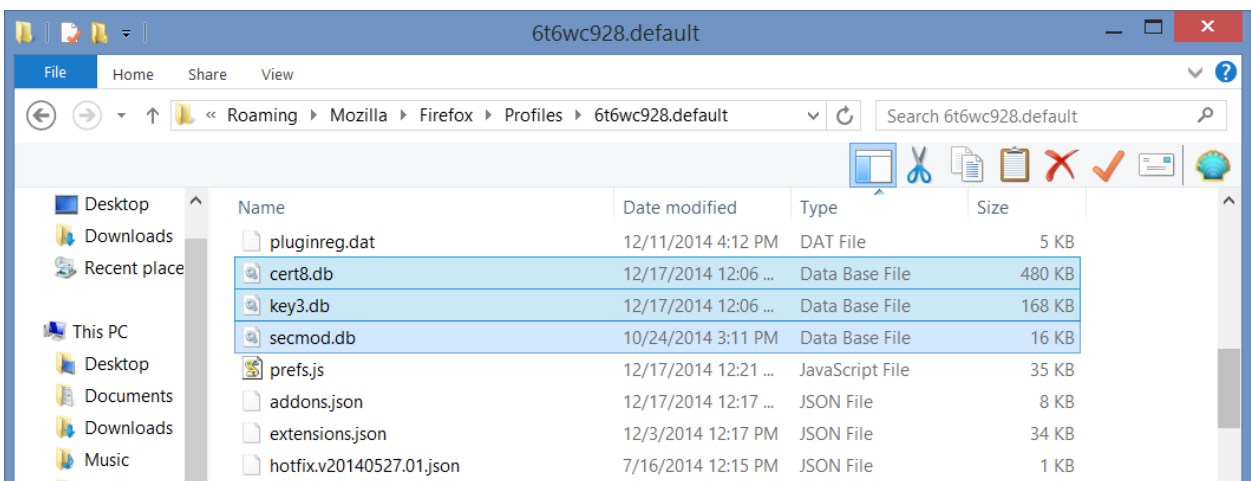
- You'll see a long list of files and folders. First, create a new folder named **Firefox Cert Store Backup MM DD YYYY**, where MM DD YYYY is today's date.



- Now arrange the files by type by clicking once on the Type heading. This will make it easy to find all three of the files you need.

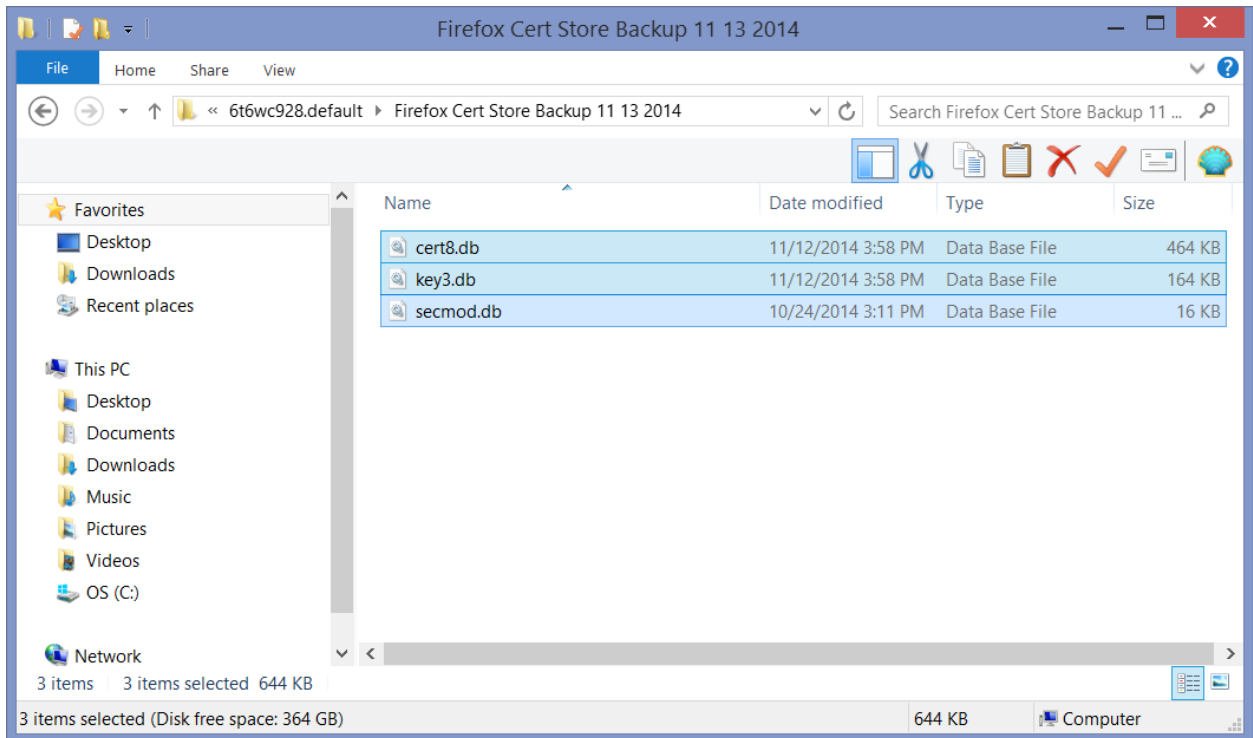


- Scroll down until you see three Data Base Files called cert8.db, key3.db, and secmod.db. Select all three files by holding down CTRL, clicking each one of them, and then releasing CTRL.



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10. Right-click anywhere on the three files and select Copy, or hit CTRL-C.
11. Scroll back up and open your Firefox Cert Store Backup *MM DD YYYY* folder.
12. Right-click anywhere in the empty space and select Paste, or hit CTRL-V.



13. Now move the *entire folder* (Firefox Cert Store Backup *MM DD YYYY*) to a safe, external location, such as a thumb drive or a shared network folder.

Congratulations! You've backed up the Firefox certificate store and will have a copy of it in case anything happens to your enrollment key pairs. If you contact our help desk for help with importing your certificate after it has been issued, be sure to mention to our help desk team that you have a backup of the Firefox certificate store.