



Pennsylvania Department of Health

PA-NEDSS

Technical Bulletin

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Document Updates for Version 16.0

Section	Notes
2.1	URL graphic updated to reflect Edge browser.
3.2	All subsections updated to reflect Edge browser.
4.0	All subsections updated to reflect Internet Options.

1 Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to provide basic technical information and hints for troubleshooting the implementation of the Pennsylvania National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (PA-NEDSS).

2 Security

PA-NEDSS is a highly secure web application that employs multiple layers of industry best practices for security. In order to achieve this high security level, the PA-NEDSS Team regularly reviews current trends in Internet threats and employs processes and technology to counter these threats. Such security practices include enforcing strong passwords, periodic password changes, secure data transmission, and industry standard user authentication methods. Additionally, the Commonwealth uses intrusion detection and prevention systems, multi-level firewalls, and user security training.

2.1 Secure Sign-In: SSL and PA-NEDSS Security


Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) is a communications protocol for transmitting private information over the Internet between the client and the server. SSL works by using two keys to encrypt data that is transmitted over the connection. Microsoft Edge supports SSL and displays a **Lock** icon  located to the left of the Address bar when the web page is protected by an SSL connection. Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) that require an SSL connection start with Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (https) instead of Hypertext Transfer Protocol (http).



Figure 2.1-1: Secured Web Page

All of the information exchanged with PA-NEDSS (including the username and password during the logon process) is encrypted before being sent over the Internet. No one can read or access the data that is being transmitted.

After the user signs in, PA-NEDSS keeps track of who the user is by using a computer-generated key rather than the PA-NEDSS username. This key, a Globally Unique Identifier (GUID), changes each time the user visits PA-NEDSS, which makes it very difficult for anyone else to pose as the user.

2.2 Passwords and Usernames

Passwords expire every 60 days. The system notifies the user at each logon of an impending password expiration beginning 25 days prior to the expiration date. At 60 days, the user will be redirected to the Password Change screen where the user must change the password before access to PA-NEDSS is granted. When changing the password, users are encouraged to also change the password hint.

If the user has forgotten his/her password, he/she can access the hint which is located by clicking the "Forgot your password?" link on the PA-NEDSS Home Page. The hint will be delivered to the e-mail address on file. The actual password will not be sent via e-mail. After reviewing the hint, if the user still cannot recall his/her

password, contact the PA-NEDSS Help Desk by calling 717-783-9171, Option 4 to have the password reset.

Passwords must be at least twelve (12) characters long, contain at least one number (0-9), and at least one uppercase and one lowercase letter (A-Z, a-z), and no spaces. It cannot contain the username, the user's first or last name, or match any of the previous six passwords. It should be difficult for others to guess! The password is also case sensitive.

PA-NEDSS accounts are locked after three failed logon attempts. Locked accounts are unlocked automatically after twelve hours. Alternatively, users may call the PA-NEDSS Help Desk (717-783-9171, Option 4) for assistance with unlocking the account.

2.3 Security Question and Answer

Each PA-NEDSS user must answer a security question in order to use the application. The security question and answer will assist the help desk in positively identifying users who request password resets, other user account specific information or any patient specific information. Once the security question and answer have been set, they can be edited at any time via the Update User Profile link on the Administration screen or the Edit User link in the upper right corner of any PA-NEDSS screen.

2.4 Browser Security Setting Requirements

In order to access PA-NEDSS, users may need to change the browser's security settings to make sure they are at the appropriate level. For Microsoft Edge, see Section 3.2 to verify and/or change your browser settings. Additional settings for Internet Options can be found in Section 4.

2.5 About Cookies

The cookies used by PA-NEDSS are not persistent. In other words, files are not stored on the user's computer. Cookies exist in the memory of the browser and as soon as the browser is closed, PA-NEDSS cookies are discarded. Moreover, the information stored in the cookie is not confidential; it is merely a unique number that allows the server to keep track of the current session, which ensures that accurate data is received.

3 System Requirements

3.1 Recommended System Requirements

The following list of system requirements is recommended, but not required, in order to access PA-NEDSS:

Internet Connection

- T1 or greater broadband Internet connection

Computer Hardware

- 4 GB of Ram
- 500 MB of hard drive space
- For optimal viewing one of two settings should be used:
 - 1366x768 resolution at 100% browser zoom only (this resolution is typical for many laptops); or,
 - 1920x1080 resolution at 100-150% browser zoom (zooming capability at this resolution has been restored)

Computer Software

- Microsoft Windows 7 or later
- Microsoft Internet Explorer 10.0 or 11.0
- Microsoft Edge (using Internet Explorer Mode)
- Support for session cookies (non-persistent)
- Support for JavaScript

3.2 Internet Explorer Mode for Edge Browser

3.2.1 Checking Default Browser

Step	Action
1.	To check your computer default web browser, in the Windows search bar type "Apps" and hit Enter.
2.	Click Apps & Features.
3.	Click Default Apps on the left side.
4.	Ensure Microsoft Edge is selected as the Default Web Browser (Figure 3.2.1-1).

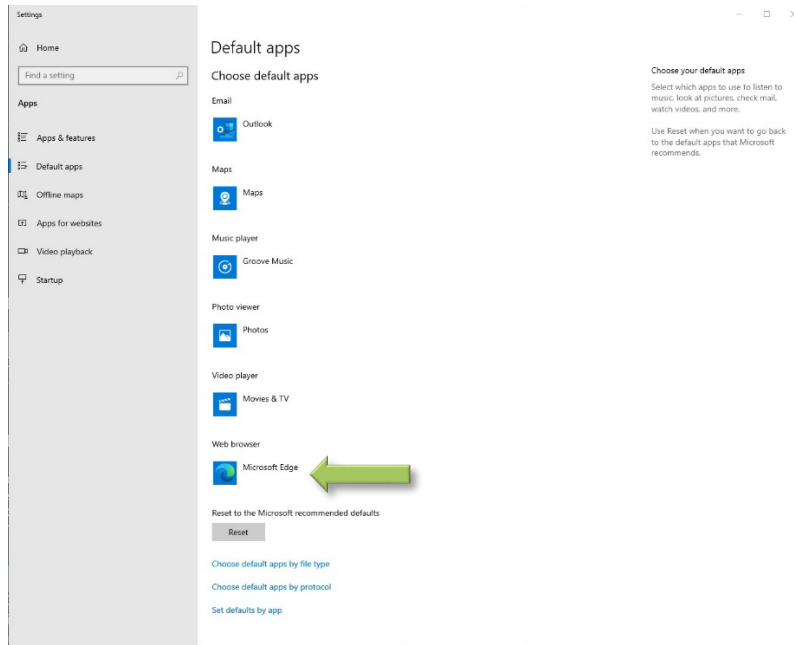


Figure 3.2.1-1: Default Web Browser

3.2.2 Internet Explorer Mode Settings

Microsoft’s Edge browser has a new compatibility mode called Internet Explorer mode (IE mode). IE Mode appears under the settings menu (...), listed as reload in Internet Explorer mode. This mode will display selected pages as they would appear in Internet Explorer 11.

Step	Action
1.	Open Microsoft Edge and click the (...) option in the upper right-hand corner. The browser settings menu dropdown appears. This selection may not appear according to local group policy settings.
2.	Click the Reload in Internet Explorer mode option to reload the site as if it were running in IE 11 (Figure 3.2.2-1).

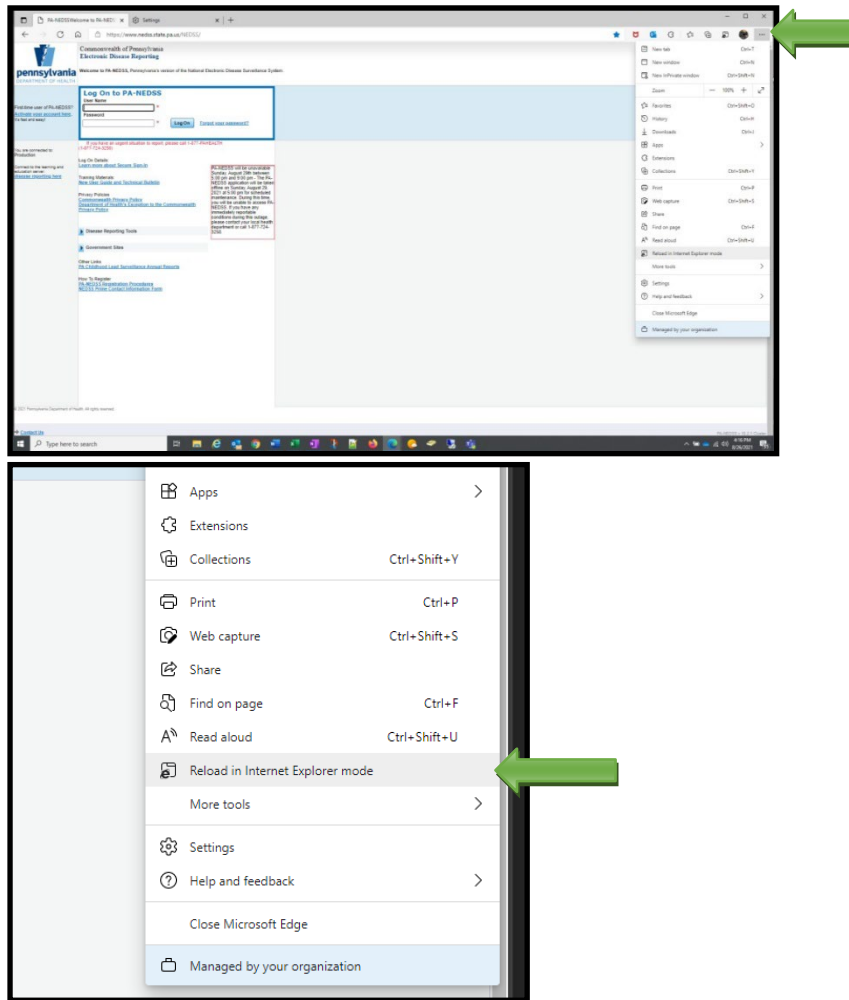


Figure 3.2.2-1: Edge Settings Menu

When "Reload in Internet Explorer mode" is selected, a new window appears with a slide switch option allowing the user to always open the page in IE mode. Sliding the switch to the right will add the URL to the Internet Explorer compatibility list so the browser will always apply IE mode when loading the site.

Step	Action
3.	Click the slide switch to add the NEDSS website to the IE Mode list (Figure 3.2.2-2).

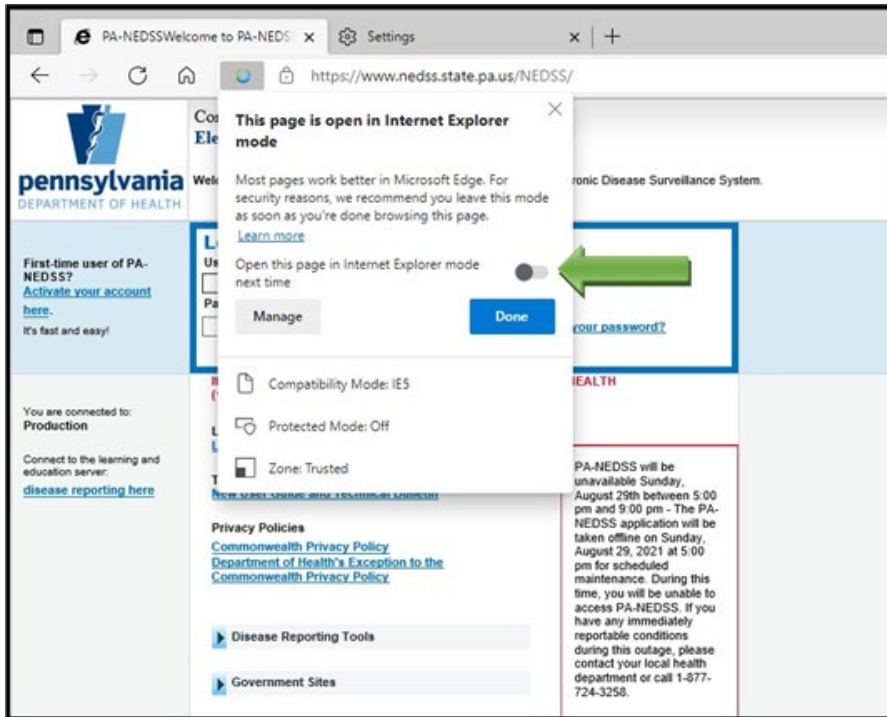


Figure 3.2.2-2: IE Mode Slide Switch

When NEDSS is loaded in IE Mode and running correctly after the settings have been applied, there will be a blue IE icon that appears to the left of the NEDSS URL.



Figure 3.2.2-3: NEDSS Loaded in IE Mode

If these settings do not appear in the list as shown, or are greyed out and inaccessible, sites can manually be entered by clicking **Settings** and **Default Browser**. This will bring up the settings control which will allow the user to manually add URL links to be loaded in Internet Explorer mode. The specific steps are listed in Section 3.2.4.

3.2.3 IE Mode Notification Bar

When a site is loaded in IE mode, there is an additional notification bar under the URL address bar confirming the site is running in IE mode. Selecting X on the far right of the bar removes the notification bar but does not remove the page from the Internet Explorer compatibility list. Selecting Leave will remove the page from IE mode and reload it in standard Edge mode.

Step	Action
1.	Click X in the upper right-hand corner (Figure 3.2.3-1). Do not click Leave, this will reload the site in standard Edge mode.

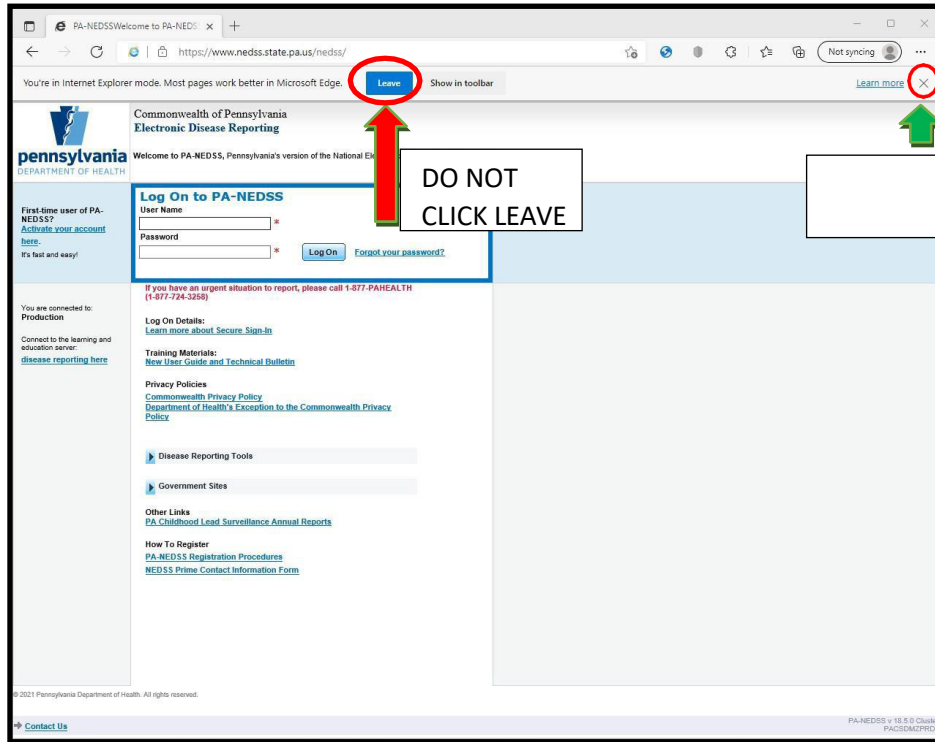


Figure 3.2.3-1: IE Mode Notification Bar

3.2.4 Setting IE Mode Manually

To view the list of sites assigned to load in IE mode, navigate to the Internet Explorer compatibility list by selecting (...), **Settings**, and **Default Browser**. Users can also navigate to this menu by selecting the **Manage** button in the IE mode pop-up window (shown on Page 31). To add a site to this list, click the **Add** button. To remove a site from this list, click the **trash can** icon.

Step	Action
1.	Click the Edge Settings Menu in the upper right-hand corner (...)
2.	Click Settings near the bottom of the list.
3.	In the left navigation list, click Default Browser (Figure 3.2.4-1).

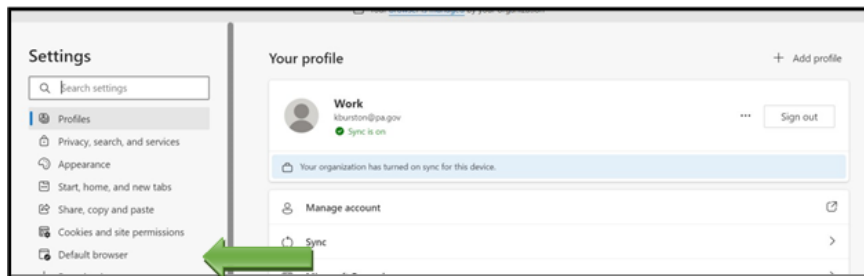


Figure 3.2.4-1: Default Browser Settings

Step	Action
4.	In the right pane, got to the section Internet Explorer Compatibility .
5.	Under Let Internet Explorer open sites in Microsoft Edge, choose Incompatible sites only (Recommended) .
6.	Under Allow sites to be reloaded in Internet Explorer mode (IE mode), choose Allow from the dropdown.
7.	Under Internet Explorer mode pages, click the Add button. In the window that appears, enter the following sites as applicable (Figure 3.2.4-2): https://www.nedss.state.pa.us/NEDSS/ (NEDSS users) https://www.nedsstest.state.pa.us/NEDSS/ (ELR onboarding)

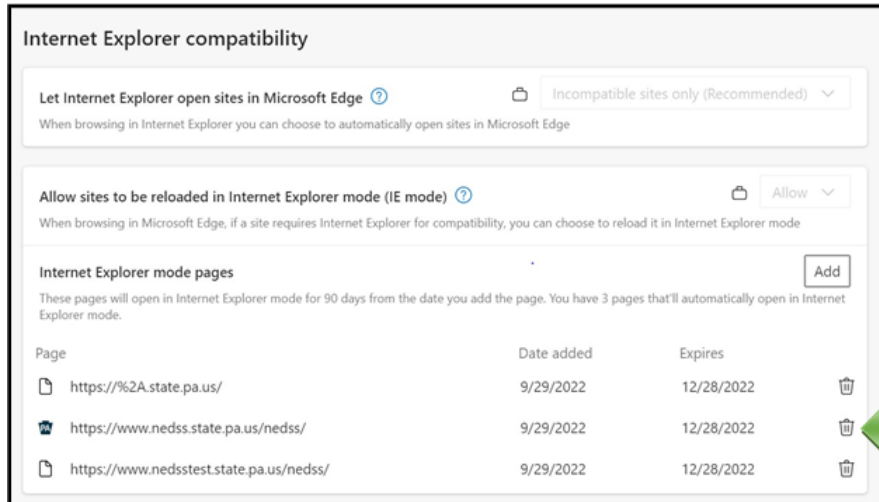


Figure 3.2.4-2: IE Mode Settings

These settings will expire in 30 days or your organization’s configuration value. This process will need to be completed again once expired. If the pop-up window below displays, click the Add back button. If the pop-up window does not display, go to itemized item below to view the list of sites.

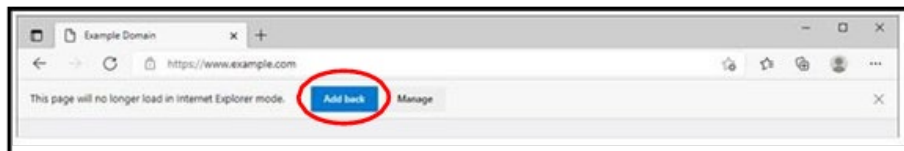


Figure 3.2.4-3: IE Mode Expiration Prompt

*** As with most browser settings, IT Policies drive what options are available. If any options listed in this document are greyed out or inaccessible, please contact the local IT Department for support.

3.2.5 JavaScript Settings

Step	Action
1.	Click the Edge Settings Menu in the upper right-hand corner (...)
2.	Click Settings near the bottom of the list.
3.	In the left navigation list, click Cookies and Site Permissions (Figure 3.2.5-1).

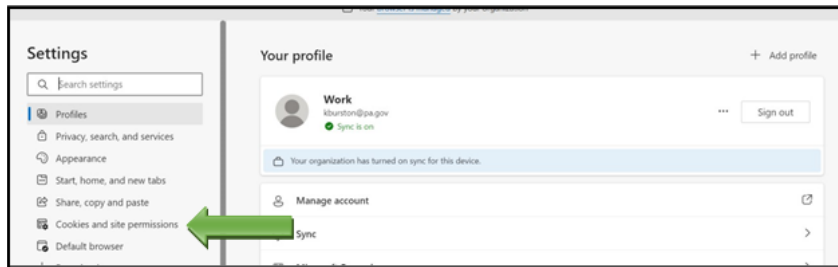


Figure 3.2.5-1: Cookies and Site Permissions Settings

Step	Action
4.	In the right pane, go to Site Permissions .
5.	Got to the section All Permissions .
6.	Click on JavaScript (Figure 3.2.5-2).

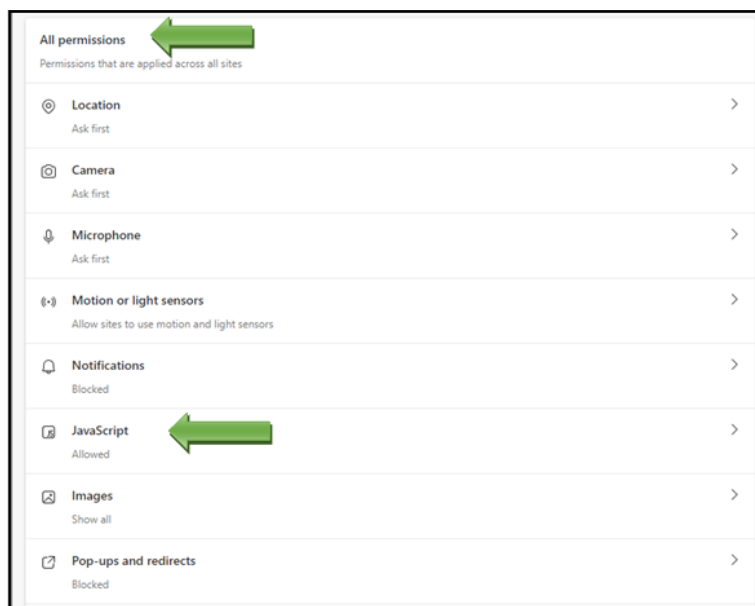


Figure 3.2.5-2: All Permissions Selections

Step	Action
7.	Click the slide switch next to Allowed (recommended) to activate it (Figure 3.2.5-3).
8.	Click the back arrow next to Site permissions / JavaScript .

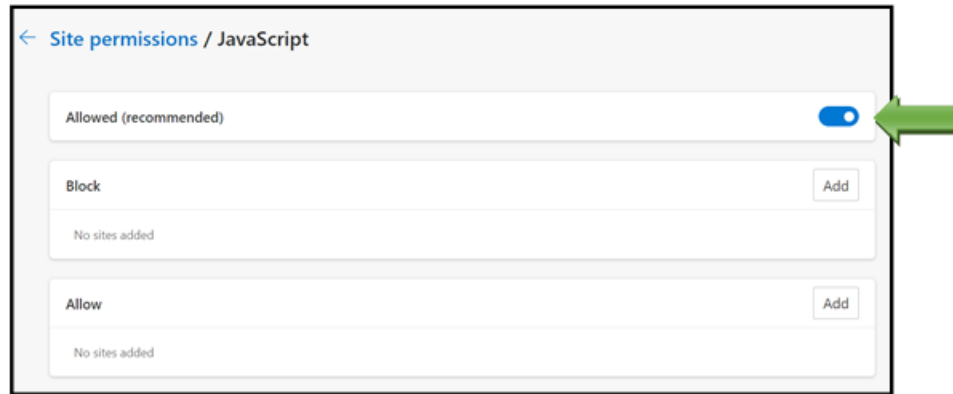


Figure 3.2.5-3: JavaScript Slide Switch

3.2.6 Pop-up Blocker Settings

Step	Action
1.	Click the Edge Settings Menu in the upper right-hand corner (...)
2.	Click Settings near the bottom of the list.
3.	In the left navigation list, click Cookies and Site Permissions (Figure 3.2.6-1).

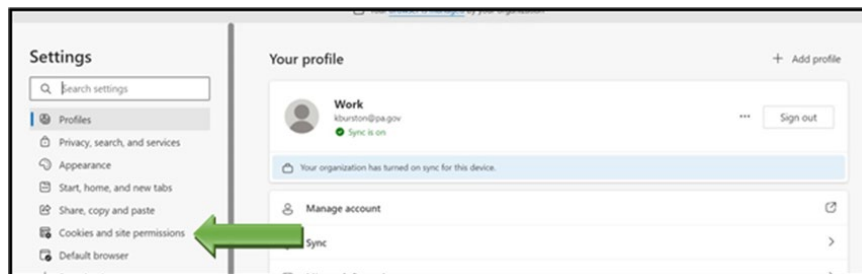


Figure 3.2.6-1: Cookies and Site Permissions Settings

Step	Action
4.	In the right pane, go to Site Permissions .
5.	Got to the section All Permissions .
6.	Click on Pop-ups and redirects (Figure 3.2.6-2).

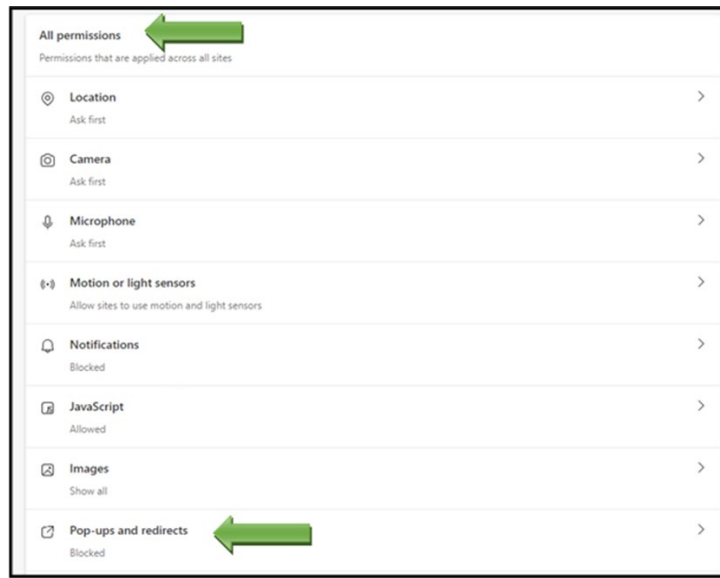


Figure 3.2.6-2: All Permissions Selections

Step	Action
7.	Click the slide switch next to Block (recommended) to activate it (Figure 3.2.6-3).
8.	Under the Allow section, delete any rows that have a NEDSS website URL.
9.	Under the Allow section, click the Add button.
10.	In the pop-up window, type: [*.]state.pa.us
11.	Click the Add button to add the URL to the Allow list.
12.	Verify the site has been added, the click the back arrow next to Site permissions / Pop-ups and redirects .



Figure 3.2.6-3: Pop-ups and redirects Settings

3.2.7 Clear Cookies and Browsing Data

Step	Action
1.	Click the Edge Settings Menu in the upper right-hand corner (...)
2.	Click Settings near the bottom of the list.
3.	In the left navigation list, click Privacy, search, and services (Figure 3.2.7-1).

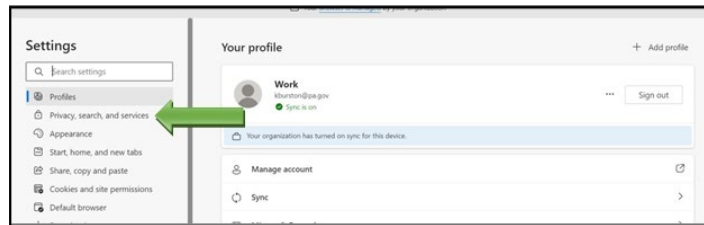


Figure 3.2.7-1: Privacy, search, and Services Settings

Step	Action
4.	In the right pane, under Clear browsing data click the Choose what to clear button (Figure 3.2.7-2).
5.	Set the Timeline at All Time in the dropdown.
6.	Check all boxes and click Clear now . Once the clearing is complete, the window will close.
7.	Under Clear browsing data for Internet Explorer , select the slide switch next to Clear chosen data ... every time you exit Microsoft Edge to activate it. This will automatically clear all IE Mode data every time you close Edge.
8.	Click the Choose what to clear button.
9.	Check all boxes and click Delete . Once the clearing is complete, the window will close.
10.	After both sections are cleared, restart the computer.

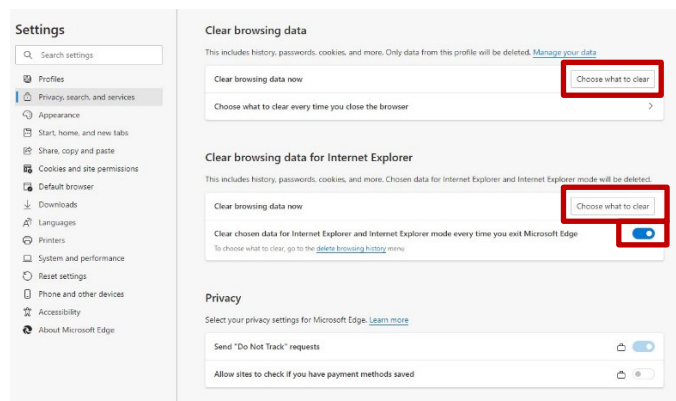


Figure 3.2.7-2: Clear Browsing Data Options

4 Optional Settings for Internet Options

In the event that the settings applied to IE Mode in Edge do not fix any issues, the following are some additional settings that can be applied that have proven to be helpful.

4.1 Recommended Pop-Up Settings

The steps outlined below explain how to change the pop-up blocker settings in Internet Explorer 11. Symptoms that may indicate changes to the settings should be applied are as follows: a page or screen will not open when using the site, the page may appear to freeze when a pop-up window should open or Internet Explorer closes when the user tries to log into PA-NEDSS. Due to restrictions enforced on some networks or machines, a user may need to contact their local desktop support team to obtain further assistance.

Step	Action
1.	To verify and/or change settings, in the search field next to the Windows icon, type Internet Options and hit Enter. Click the Internet Options app and select the Privacy tab.
2.	Select the Settings button under the Pop-Up Blocker section (Figure 3.3-2).

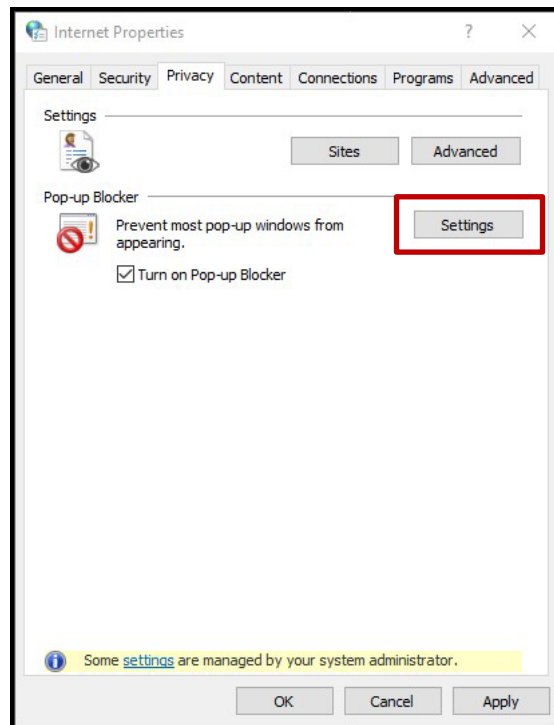


Figure 3.3-2: Select Pop-up blocker

Step	Action
3.	<p>Type https://www.nedss.state.pa.us/NEDSS/ in the Address of website to allow box. Click Add (Figure 3.3-3).</p> <p>Type *.state.pa.us in the Address of website to allow box. Click the Add button (Figure 3.3-3). Both sites will be displayed in the Allowed sites section.</p> <p>Deselect (uncheck) Show Notification bar when a pop-up is blocked. Selected blocking level should be set to Low: Allow pop-ups from secure sites.</p> <p>Click the Close button to close the Pop-up Blocker Settings window and return to the Internet Explorer window.</p> <p>Note: PA-ELR on-boarding users should also type https://www.nedsstest.state.pa.us/ in the Address of website to allow box and click Add.</p>

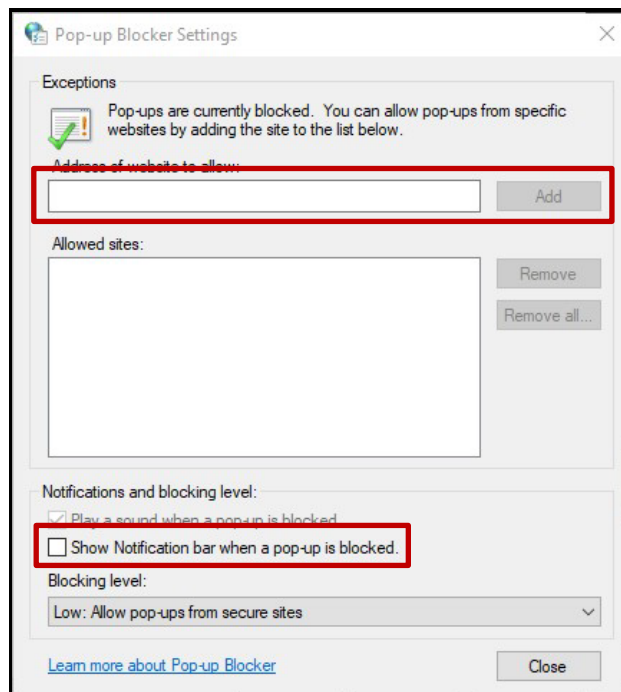



Figure 3.3-3: Add URLs as Allowed

4.2 The Security Tab

Step	Action
1.	To verify and/or change settings, in the search field next to the Windows icon, type Internet Options and hit Enter. Click the Internet Options app and select the Security tab.
2.	<p>Click the Trusted Sites  icon to display the Trusted Site section. Click the Sites button to display the Trusted Sites pop-up window and type https://www.nedss.state.pa.us/NEDSS/ in the Add this website to the zone box as a Trusted Site, click Add. The web site address will now be displayed in the Websites window.</p> <p>Click Close to re-display the Internet Options window.</p> <p>Note: PA-ELR on-boarding users should also add https://www.nedsstest.state.pa.us/ as a Trusted Site.</p>

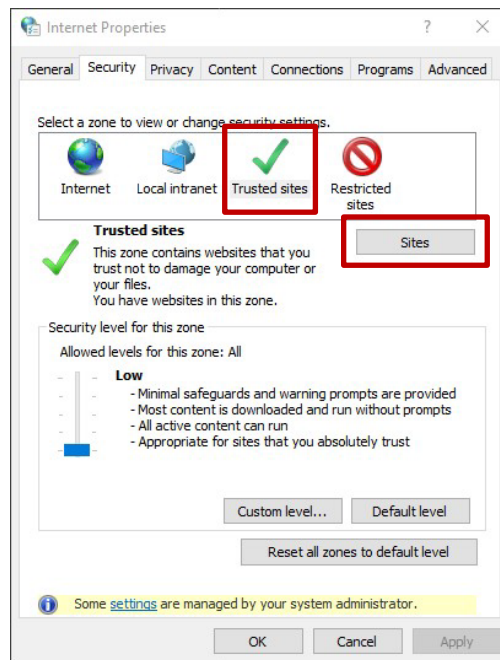


Figure 3.2.1-1: Internet Options

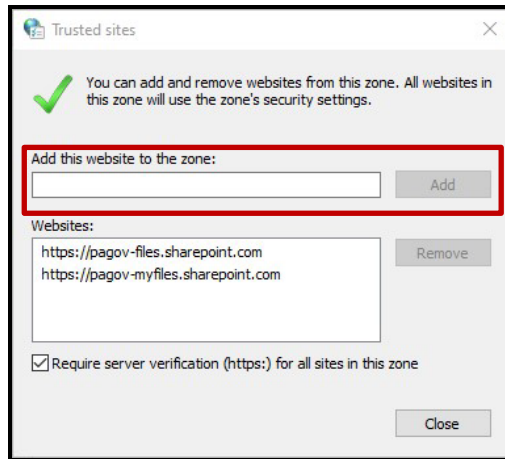
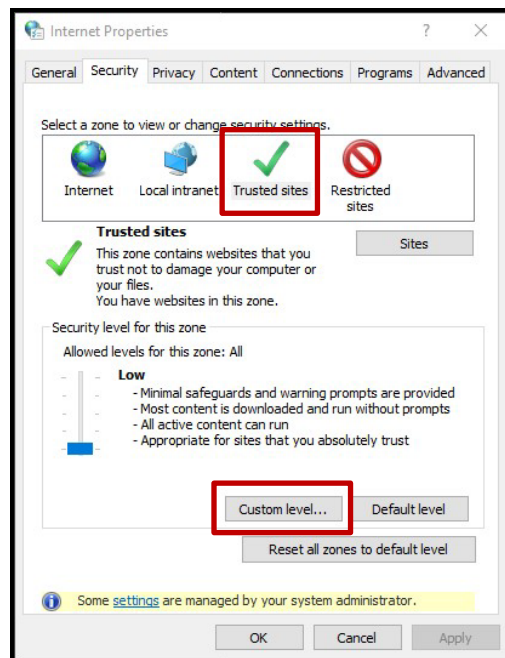


Figure 3.2.1-2: Trusted Sites

Step	Action
3.	<p>Next, verify that the security level for the Trusted Sites zone is set to Medium (default). Click the Custom Level button (Figure 3.2.1-1) to display the Security Settings – Trusted Sites Zone pop-up window (Figure 3.2.1-3). At the Reset Custom Settings section, if not set to Low, select Low from the Reset to drop-down menu (Figure 3.2.1-3) and click the Reset button.</p>



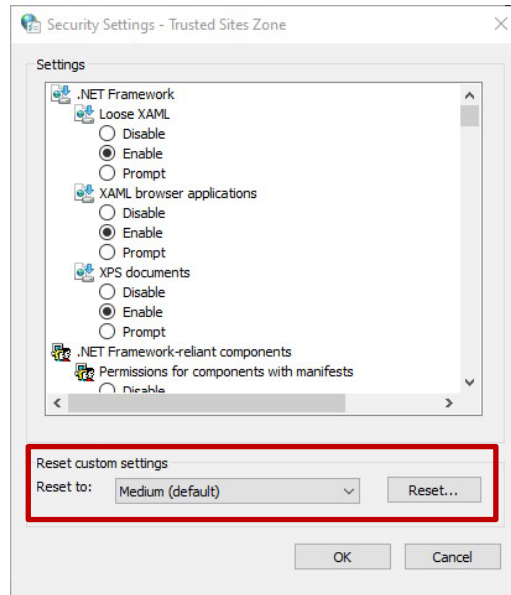


Figure 3.2.1-3: Security Settings

Step	Action
4.	<p>At the Security Settings – Trusted Sites Zone window (Figure 3.2.1-3), set the following key security settings related to scripting.</p> <p>Scroll down to the Scripting section and set the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active scripting set as Enable. Allow Programmatic clipboard access set as Prompt. Scripting of Java applets set as Enable. <p>Scroll down to the Miscellaneous section and set the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display mixed content set as Disable. <p>Click Ok to close the window (Figure 3.2.1-3) and return to the Internet Options window.</p> <p>Click Ok to close the Internet Options window (Figure 3.2.1-1) and return to the Internet Explorer window.</p> <p>Note: This will change the settings for all Trusted Sites.</p>

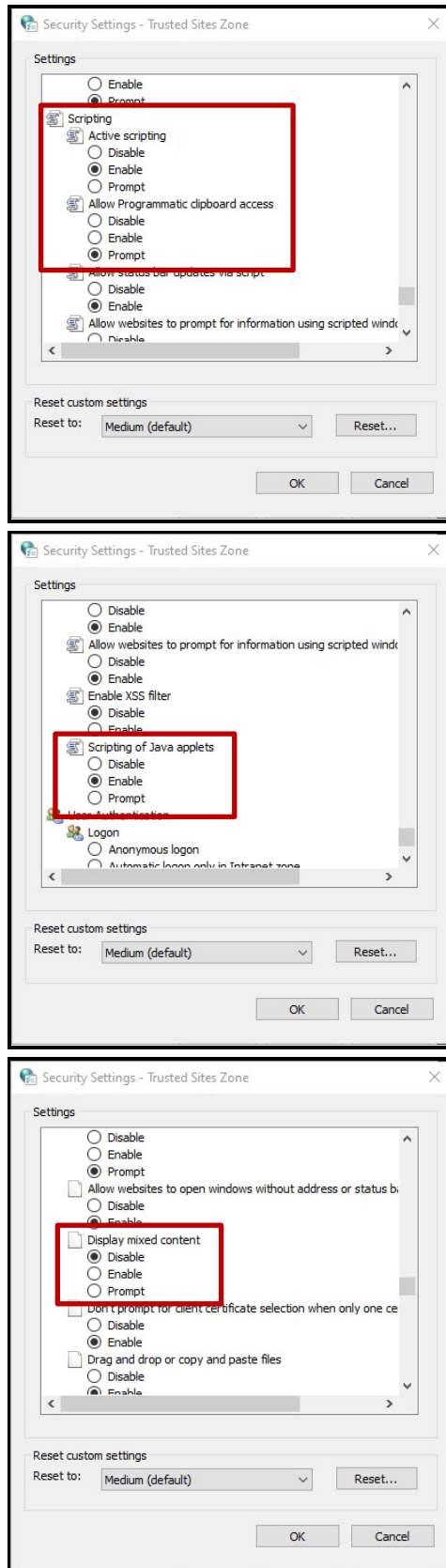


Figure 3.2.1-4: Security Settings

4.3 The Advanced Tab

Step	Action
1.	To verify and/or change settings, in the search field next to the Windows icon, type Internet Options and hit Enter. Click the Internet Options app and select the Advanced tab.
2.	Scroll down to the HTTP settings section and place a checkmark <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> next to the following (Figure 3.2.2-1): Use HTTP 1.1 (both options) and Use HTTP2

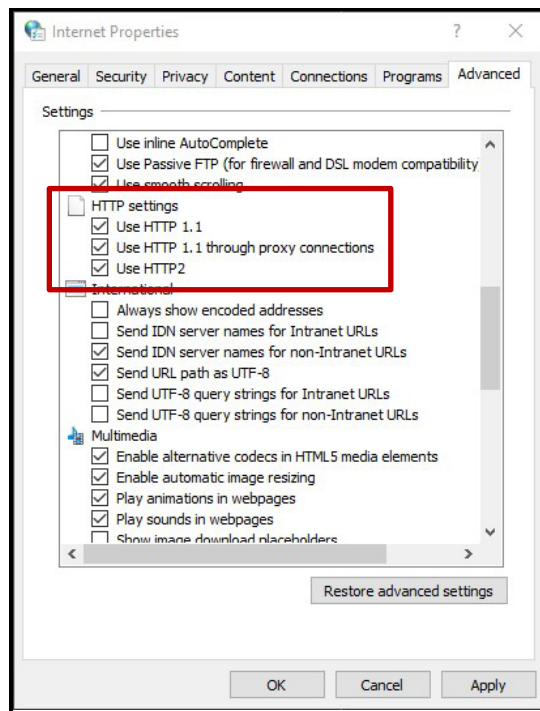


Figure 3.2.2-1: HTTP Section

Step	Action
3.	<p>Next, scroll down to the Security section and verify the following (Figure 3.3.2-2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There should be no checkmark <input type="checkbox"/> next to Do not save encrypted pages to disk, Use SSL 3.0, Use SSL 1.0, and Use TLS 1.3 <p>Click Ok to close the Internet Options window and return to the Internet Explorer window.</p>

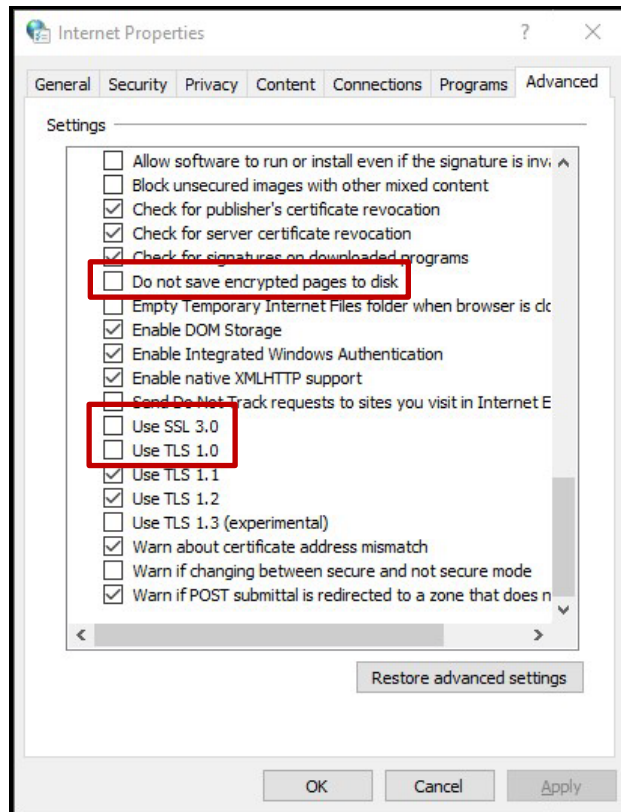


Figure 3.2.2-2: Security Section

4.3 Advanced Settings for Local IT Group Policy

If the PA-NEDSS web application still does not work properly in Edge, set up EDGE Enterprise Compatibility Mode List setting.

Your organization's IT will need to setup this setting.

Step	Action
1.	Open Edge and type: <code>edge://compat/enterprise</code>
2.	Using an XML editor, create an XML file with the lines listed in the screenshot below to setup Enterprise Compatibility Mode List setting.
3.	Compat-mode line is the DEFAULT IE MODE line.

Insert to XML schema for Group Policy – Enterprise Compatibility Mode List
(`edge://compat/`)

```
<site url=www.nedss.state.pa.us>
  <compat-mode>IE11Enterprise</compat-mode>
  <open-in>IE11</open-in>
</site> <site url=www.nedsstest.state.pa.us>
  <compat-mode>IE11Enterprise</compat-mode>
```

4.	After the change is applied, close all open web browsers and save all work, restart the computer.
5.	After logging back in, open Edge and load NEDSS.

5 Frequently Asked Questions

Users should also beware of **Phishing** attacks. Phishing attacks are “spoofed” e-mails that appear to come from a legitimate source asking to provide or confirm confidential information such as PA-NEDSS usernames and passwords. If users receive a suspicious e-mail concerning PA-NEDSS, please call the Help Desk at 717-783-9171 immediately. Do not respond to any e-mails from unknown senders. DOH Staff will **never** send e-mails or call asking for confidential information or account information such as usernames or passwords. If an e-mail appears to have come from a DOH Staff member requesting this type of information, please treat it as a Phishing attack. Also, always remember never to enter PA-NEDSS usernames or passwords into any site other than the PA-NEDSS log in screen at <https://www.nedss.state.pa.us>. Lastly, be sure not to click any links contained in e-mails which appear to be a Phishing attack.

Question: Who determines the access rights for users, or do all users have the same level of access?

Answer: All hospital, laboratory, and physician users have the same level of access – users can see data that anyone in their organization has entered in PA-NEDSS. Users are allowed to view and update data that someone in their licensed organization has created, or where they have a unique identifier (accession #) and the patient’s last name. A hospital and a laboratory are considered to be separate organizations even though they are under the same management chain; Public Health Staff have different access rights determined by their supervisors.

Question: When do passwords expire and are users prompted to change them?

Answer: Passwords expire every 60 days. At that time, users will be redirected to a screen where they must change their password before logging on to the site. The system will notify the user at each log on of an impending password expiration beginning 25 days prior to the expiration date.

Question: Who terminates user accounts when employees are terminated or no longer need access to PA-NEDSS?

Answer: Users should contact the PA-NEDSS Help Desk at 717-783-9171 to report that an employee has left. The user’s account will be disabled by the Department of Health Security Officer.

Question: Will my organization’s firewalls interfere with the use of PA-NEDSS?

Answer: Firewalls may or may not pose an issue in using PA-NEDSS. In order to work successfully, the firewall must be able to pass traffic on TCP port 443 (SSL traffic for secure Web browsing). This port is typically open, but if users are having trouble accessing PA-NEDSS, they should check with their firewall administrator or contact their information technology department.

Question: How does my account become locked?

Answer: PA-NEDSS accounts will become locked after three failed attempts to log on to PA-NEDSS. Account will become unlocked automatically after 12 hours or users may call the PA-NEDSS Help Desk at 771-783-9171, Option 4 for assistance with unlocking their account.

Question: What is the process to follow if someone believes his or her password was compromised?

Answer: The user can change his/her password from the Change Password link on the Administration page or by contacting the PA-NEDSS Help Desk at 717-783-9171, Option 4 to reset their password.

Question: This bulletin describes usage of the PA-NEDSS application in the Internet Explorer browser, but Microsoft is dropping support for this browser in June 2022. PA-NEDSS does not run correctly in other browsers currently. What is happening with the application going forward?

Answer: The PA-NEDSS Application Support Team is currently working to update the application to run correctly in modern browsers, concentrating on the now standard Microsoft Edge browser. The application will run correctly in Edge prior to Internet Explorer's retirement date of June 2022. Following the work with Edge, the Team will turn to performing updates for the application to work properly in other standard browsers such as Chrome and Firefox.

Question: My IT Department has removed the Internet Explorer browser due to Microsoft dropping support for it in the near future. We are required to use the Edge browser but PA-NEDSS does not work correctly in Edge. What should I do?

Answer: Microsoft Edge has included a new feature called Internet Explorer Mode, which reloads designated pages as if they were opened in Internet Explorer 11. Use of this mode is described in **Section 3.3** above. This mode has been tested by the PA-NEDSS Application Support Staff and has been shown to fix all issues PA-NEDSS users currently encounter when running the application in the Edge standard browser.

Question: What are some frequent downstream effects within the PA-NEDSS application when the browser and/or settings are not updated?

Answer: Registration fails when trying to log in, user is unable to search and produce results, the inbox says amount but does not display results, when trying to submit reports during the address verification service PA-NEDSS does not allow you to advance and does not display in system.

Question: What do you do if your settings are managed by your organization and are unable to change your browser or settings?

Answer: After following the attachment, reach out to your IT Department and forward this document so they can update your settings.

Question: What browser would you use if you are a MAC user and cannot access PA-NEDSS?

Answer: First option, [How to install Virtual Box on Windows 10](#). Download VirtualBox software to your device and select Windows 10 and Edge. Then setup Edge using our Technical Bulletin. When exiting, select "save machine session". Then when you log back, in the Edge settings will be intact.

Another option: [Download Microsoft Edge Web Browser | Microsoft](#)

6 Contact Information

Users can make suggestions or communicate technical problems using a web form accessible from the **Contact Us** link from any PA-NEDSS screen.

The PA-NEDSS Help Desk can be reached by calling 717-783-9171, Option 4, or via email at ra-dhNEDSS@pa.gov.