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Microsoft releases early patch for the VML flaw

By ICTWorld, 27 September 2006

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Microsoft has broken its patch Tuesday cycle, which falls on the second Tuesday of every month, to release a fix for the critical and widely exploited VML vulnerability in Internet Explorer.

The patch can be found at <http://www.microsoft.com/technet/security/bulletin/ms06-055.msp>. It aims to plug the remote code execution vulnerability in the Vector Markup Language (VML), when a smartly crafted Web page with VML containing a long 'fill' inside a 'rect' tag is displayed in IE. Microsoft was under pressure as the number of Web sites hosting malicious exploits for the vulnerability grew significantly, while scamsters sent out spoof e-cards leading users to many sites that dropped Keyloggers into user computers via the flaw.

“The potential risk level of a vulnerability depends on more factors than the mere gravity of the software flaw,” says Govind Rammurthy, CEO of MicroWorld Technologies. “Different attack vectors, availability of the exploit code, the amount of user interaction required for a successful penetration, and the level of organising and co-ordination displayed in the attack, all contribute towards how serious the threat can become within

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a short span of time. In that sense, this VML vulnerability had all the right ingredients to make you dash for cover.”

An imminent possibility of changing vectors and targets loomed in the form of mass mailing attacks aiming at Outlook and Outlook Express, both using IE’s rendering mechanisms to preview e-mails. It meant that the attacker could compromise and take over a remote computer with little or no action from the victim’s side.

In the mean time, a security group named Zero Day Emergency Response Team (ZERT) offered an unofficial patch for the vulnerability, presenting users with the tough choice between perils of a critical browser vulnerability and a possible software clash arising from a third party component. The plot got thicker with the second unofficial patch coming from a vulnerability management firm, Patchlink.

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An advertisement for DataPro ADSL. The background is a grayscale image of a crumpled piece of paper. At the top, the word "DataPro" is written in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. Below it, in a smaller font, is the tagline "INTERNET SOLUTIONS FOR THE REAL WORLD". The main text of the ad is centered and reads: "Click and switch to DataPro ADSL for A faster, more reliable internet experience". The word "Click" is underlined and in red, while the rest of the text is in black.

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