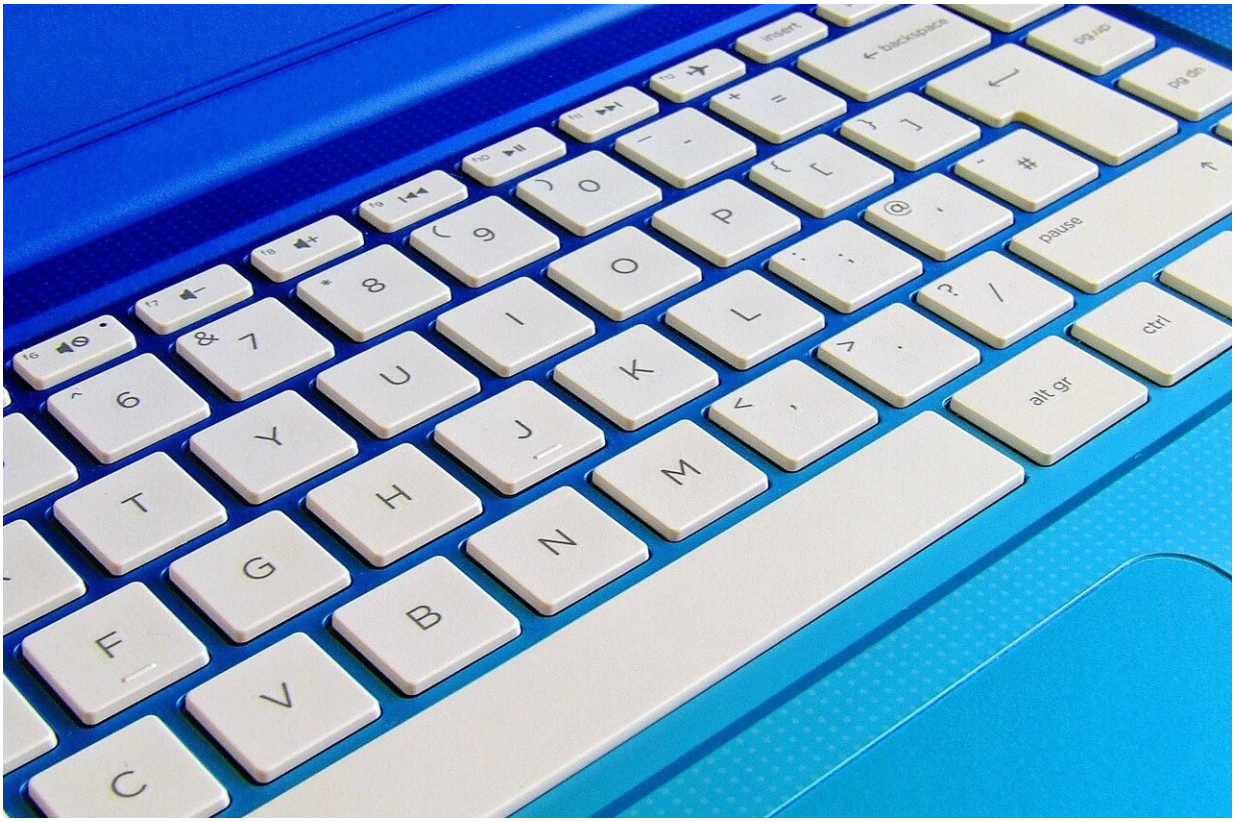
Microsoft patch awaited for zero-day vulnerability

August 31 2018, by Nancy Owano



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

A Windows zero-day bug has made the news. By zero-day, it means that a vulnerability has been exposed but it is not yet patched.

Darren Allan in *TechRadar* was one of the tech watchers reporting on the vulnerability, which could occur through a privilege escalation bug.

Who found the hole? Allan said it was Twitter user SandboxEscaper.

So, just an attention-seeking gimmick wasting time in false claims with no grounds for concern?

No.

"The user linked to a page on GitHub which appears to contain a proof-of-concept (PoC) for the vulnerability," said Charlie Osborne in *ZDNet*.

"CERT/CC (the US cybersecurity organization which looks to counter emerging threats) has confirmed that this vulnerability can be leveraged against a 64-bit Windows 10 PC which has been fully patched up to date, " said *TechRadar*, in turn referring to a story in *The Register*,

Richard Chergwin, *The Register*, had reported that "CERT/CC vulnerability analyst Will Dormann quickly verified the bug."

CERT/CC did a formal investigation, and posted an advisory. "'Microsoft Windows task scheduler contains a vulnerability in the handling of ALPC, which can allow a local user to gain SYSTEM privileges,' the alert stated."

Last revised: 30 Aug 2018, the Vulnerability Note VU#906424 said, "The Microsoft Windows task scheduler SchRpcSetSecurity API contains a vulnerability in the handling of ALPC, which can allow an authenticated user to overwrite the contents of a file that should be protected by filesystem ACLs. This can be leveraged to gain SYSTEM privileges. We have confirmed that the public exploit code works on 64-bit Windows 10 and Windows Server 2016 systems. We have also

confirmed compatibility with 32-bit Windows 10 with minor modifications to the public exploit code. Compatibility with other Windows versions is possible with further modifications."

Should we worry? Allan said it is a local bug. The attacker would have to be already logged into the PC to exploit it, or be running code on the machine.

But wait. Though local, *Ars Technica*'s Peter Bright let its readers know what the flaw allows one to do. Not pretty.

Bright wrote that "The flaw allows anyone with the ability to run code on a system to elevate their privileges to 'SYSTEM' level, the level used by most parts of the operating system and the nearest thing that Windows has to an all-powerful superuser."

Osborne in *ZDNet* said that while the impact was limited, "the public disclosure of a zero-day is still likely a headache for the Redmond giant."

A zero-day bug is a reasonable explanation of why Sandbox was in the news but it was the way in which the bug was revealed that made news too:

Chapter One: it was publicly outed.

TechRadar: "...it seems that someone got frustrated with Microsoft's procedures for submitting bugs and vulnerabilities, and decided just to go ahead and publicly out the vulnerability instead."

Chapter Two: Microsoft is a cool company.

SandboxEscaper, though, subsequently tweeted: "I screwed up, not

MSFT (they are actually a cool company). Depression sucks."

A patch is doubtless in the works, said *TechRadar*. "It is not clear as to when the patch will arrive," said *Silicon Republic*, "but Microsoft's next scheduled Patch Tuesday is 11 September."

"Windows has a customer commitment to investigate reported security issues, and proactively update impacted devices as soon as possible," a Microsoft spokesperson stated. "Our standard policy is to provide solutions via our current Update Tuesday schedule."

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