



Software

Report: Windows 7 is Hard to Hack if Administrators Correctly Handle Rights

Jason Mick (Blog) - March 30, 2010 9:36 AM

Print E-mail del.icio.us listen now

29 comment(s) - last by erple2.. on Mar 31 at 6:01 PM

Most security problems with Windows 7 are the result of administrative inexperience, not inherent flaws, study indicates

A [new study](#) [PDF] by security researchers at BeyondTrust gives Microsoft's Windows 7 a thumbs up when it comes to security. It finds that while the hundreds of thousands of active malicious users worldwide (if not millions) may be able, in some cases, to compromise the operating system, the risk of that happening can be greatly reduced with proper rights administration.

That may sound like common sense. However, for years Windows has been the [butt of jokes](#) from the likes of Apple, Inc. and others for being "insecure" and "full of viruses".

And to some extent some of that criticism was apt. Windows for more than a decade has been the world's most used operating system, with over a billion active Windows users operating today. That means that attacks from cybercriminals focused on Windows users, rather than focusing on Mac users, who enjoy a comparatively small market share, in many respects. And while past versions of Windows, such as Windows 2000, Windows XP, and Windows Vista were relatively secure, often times they were not secure enough to safeguard users from all dangers.

Proper management of administrative rights -- regardless of the OS -- has always been a good way to minimize attacks. On Windows 7, though, which comes packed with [new memory protections](#), BeyondTrust says that rights management can prevent not just some, but nearly all security risks.

It found in its study that 90% of Windows 7 vulnerabilities to date and 100% of Microsoft Office vulnerabilities found last year could have been safeguarded against by taking away users' administrative rights. Doing so would have also have protected against 94 percent of Internet Explorer vulnerabilities and 100 percent of Internet Explorer 8 vulnerabilities. This is especially pertinent as hackers from China used flaws in Internet Explorer 6 to [steal data from Google](#) in late 2009.

Limiting administrative rights can be a bit inconvenient. Often times power users may have to have administrative rights regranted and then taken back away under such a regime. However, as the BeyondSecurity report indicates, the investment in time pays off.

States BeyondTrust EVP of corporate development Steve Kelley, "Enterprises continue to face imminent danger from zero-day attacks as new vulnerabilities are exploited before patches can ever be developed and deployed. Our findings reflect the critical role that restricting administrator rights plays in protecting against these types of threats."

For what it's worth, Microsoft has been trying to preach this point for over a decade to Windows administrators. A [1999 TechNet post](#) from Microsoft informs, "Unauthorized or unknowledgeable people who have administrator privileges can maliciously or accidentally damage your organization if they copy or delete confidential data, spread viruses, or disable your network. It is vitally important to properly manage the users and groups that have administrative control over the servers and domain controllers in your network."



Don't blame Microsoft for the majority of Windows 7's security problems. According a new report, most of these problems could have been prevented if Windows administrators exercised proper rights management. Poor rights management is dangerous on any platform -- Windows, Linux, or OS X. (Source: Apple)

Related Articles

Microsoft IE Flaw Exploited by Hackers to Steal Info From Google

January 15, 2010, 10:01 AM

Apple Ready to Counter Windows 7 Launch with New "Get a Mac" Commercials

October 15, 2009, 3:23 PM

Hacker: Apple's Snow Leopard Protections Weaker Than Windows 7's

September 17, 2009, 11:32 AM

Latest Headlines

Bionic Vision Unveils Advanced Prototype Electronic Eyeball

March 31, 2010, 4:17 PM

Hyundai Unleashes 39 MPG HWY Sonata Hybrid, 274 HP Sonata Turbo

March 31, 2010, 2:50 PM

Updated: AT&T Races to Try to Improve Voice Network

March 31, 2010, 2:15 PM

64GB Zune HD Coming April 12, Priced at \$349.99

March 31, 2010, 12:34 PM

3/31/2010 Daily Hardware Reviews

March 31, 2010, 12:26 PM

Cell Phone Antenna-Fearing Residents Vow Not to Give Up After Defeat

March 31, 2010, 11:16 AM

[More Headlines](#)

Most Popular Articles

Researchers Show How to Remotely Steal Pics, SMS Texts From iPhone

March 25, 2010, 9:01 AM

Lady Gaga is First to Reach 1 Billion Web Video Views

March 25, 2010, 4:00 PM

NVIDIA Soft Launches GeForce GTX 480, 470; Cards Hit Retail April 12

March 26, 2010, 7:01 PM

Updated: GAO Discovers EnergyStar Program is Incredibly Flawed

March 26, 2010, 5:00 PM

Infamous Hacker Once Buried \$1M in Backyard, Now Gets 20 Years

March 26, 2010, 9:14 AM

Latest Blog Posts

Navy Seeking Carrier Drone for Use in 2018

[Michael Barkoviak](#) - Mar 31, 2010, 2:00 PM