
IBM Z® and
IBM® LinuxONE
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IBM Z and IBM® LinuxONE Security Portal

Frequently Asked Questions

Worldwide



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General Questions

What is the origin of the IBM Z® and IBM® LinuxONE Security Portal?

The current IBM Z and IBM® LinuxONE Security Portal (Security Portal) began as a beta project with several of our most security conscious clients leading the direction of the program with their requirements and insight. We jointly created content and a process that met the needs (operational, regulatory, etc.) of the clients while minimizing their security risk. Since then, we have made major improvements and updates to the Security Portal based on continued client feedback and Design Thinking engagements. We meet with our IBM Z clients regularly to provide educational updates and to gather requirements. We engage with clients as needed to assist in the integration of the Security Portal in their enterprise security process and policy.

What is provided on the Security Portal?

The Security Portal currently has Security / Integrity APAR information for the z/OS® and z/VM® operating systems and associated IBM products that ship fixes via PTF, along with critical Security Notices that address hardware, firmware, and software issues. Security information for the z/TPF operating system is also now included in the Security Notice section of the Security Portal.

What is System Integrity?

The IBM Z System Integrity Statement represents decades of confidence and commitment in the IBM Z and IBM® LinuxONE platforms. System integrity has many facets, including excellence in system security, design, development, and build. These are all intended to prevent unauthorized application programs, subsystems, and users from bypassing system security, preventing them from gaining access, circumventing, disabling, altering, or obtaining control of key system processes and resources unless allowed by the installation.

The IBM Z System Integrity Statement can be found at <https://ibm.biz/zsystem-integrity>

Why is this Security Portal necessary?

IBM does not make Security / Integrity data publicly available for IBM Z. The Security Portal provides a controlled notification and distribution mechanism to help ensure this critical information is available to IBM Z clients without publicly posting information that could put their systems in danger. Those IBM clients decide who within their organization has a need to access the security portal, need to know.

Why are Security / Integrity APARs not publicly posted via CERT vulnerabilities, CVE or other means?

Working closely with IBM Z clients over the years continues to support the position that, Security / Integrity APAR data should be kept confidential and provided to only those that have a verifiable need to know. Organizations, like US-CERT, CVE, Open Source, as well as others have a different philosophy. They believe in full disclosure and the public dissemination of

vulnerability information. There are pros and cons to each approach and we, along with many mainframe customers, believe that public release of this data is not in the best interest of the IBM Z community. Since IBM provides both the operating system and the hardware under licensing agreements it is relatively easy to verify each client has access to the security information they need to keep their systems up to date.

Why are CVE or CERT VU numbers not incorporated in the provided APAR information?

In conjunction with client requirements, IBM Z supports the policy to ensure that the details of Security /Integrity APARs not be made publicly available. In some cases, these details might have been reported by a particular client and reporting details could put their enterprise at risk. Adding a CVE or CERT VU number to an APAR description would provide additional detail that could increase risk to clients. In the case of a highly publicized vulnerability there may be a Security Notice added to the Security Portal that may contain both CVE information and possible mitigations to help reduce risk to well-known issues. It is critical that both APAR information and Security Notices are both monitored regularly in accordance with your security policy.

How can I derive value from the IBM Z Security Portal?

The initial value of this site is in the aggregated list of security and system integrity APARs for both z/OS and z/VM®. You will find this information on the "Primary resources" tab for "z/OS Security / Integrity" data or "z/VM Security / Integrity APAR Data". For z/OS this is the Enhanced HOLDDATA for the Security and Integrity APARs that is used as input for SMP/E. The z/VM file is a human readable file that contains the relevant APAR and PTF information for security and system integrity issues. At a minimum these security fixes should be applied. Security Notices are an added value, providing critical information and insight on a platform wide array of topics.

The Enhanced HOLDDATA includes ++HOLDS for SECINT (security & integrity) APARs. The HOLDDATA is used by SMP/E to create an ERRSYSMODS report that identifies the missing SECINT fixes or PTFs specific to your target system.

Why do different platforms have different processes for disclosing vulnerability information?

Some platforms have chosen to publicly disclose their security vulnerability information. For these platforms this method makes sense. For example, a Linux® distribution does not know every machine, in every country, that is running a particular version of Linux. Given the number of Linux images in the world they cannot risk that an unpatched security vulnerability might permit bad actors to take over these machines and use them in a disruptive or surreptitious manner.

The IBM Z platform is different. It is a much smaller community that is well known. Both the z/OS and z/VM operating systems are licensed products that make each valid customer known to IBM. With the critical workloads running on these systems, the impact of a vulnerability being exploited, however, could severely damage customer operations and business. IBM Z

customers can gain access to the Security Portal with the confidence that IBM attempts to limit access to IBM Z clients and thus exclude bad actors or malicious users.

Why are the details of a vulnerability not publicly available?

One of the benefits for not providing vulnerability details is that both external attackers and internal personnel threats cannot get access to information that could put an enterprise at undue risk. Efforts to limit the attack surface by limiting information to those who demonstrate a need to know will continue to help to mitigate an enterprise's vulnerability to attacks.

When there is a security concern should I expect a Red Alert or a HIPER APAR?

There is often confusion on Red Alerts and HIPERs vs. the Security Portal. The Security Portal and process has been around since the early 2000's. Likewise Red Alerts and HIPERs have been around longer. The Portal, HIPERs and Red Alerts are all part of how IBM communicates platform concerns. Opposite to the Security Portal, HIPERs and Red Alerts are public, available to anyone and do not contain or communicate security or system integrity issues. Where there is sometimes confusion is that data integrity issues, not system integrity, are broadcast very publicly via Red Alerts and HIPER. If there is some possibility that an IBM product can cause a customer's data to be corrupted, we very quickly broadcast what they need to do to mitigate the data integrity concern via Red Alert or HIPER.

How is the information obtained via the Security Portal related to the support process?

The support process is unchanged. This remains the mechanism for clients to report problems to IBM. A problem may or may not be a security or integrity concern. If a problem is determined to be a security or integrity vulnerability the resulting APAR/PTF will be treated as IBM Confidential and subsequently available via the IBM Z Security Portal. For cases opened for information about security or integrity APARs/PTFs, customers will be directed to the Security Portal.

What are the Terms and Conditions for accessing the IBM Z and LinuxONE Security Portal?

The current Terms and Conditions for accessing the IBM Z and LinuxONE Security Portal are as follows:

By accessing the IBM Z and LinuxONE Security Portal ("Portal"), IBM provides IBM confidential information ("Information") with You. Information is provided AS-IS. Information may include, but is not limited to the following, whether or not marked or described as "IBM Confidential": security and vulnerability information. You must keep the Information strictly confidential. You will use Information only for purposes of internally managing your IBM Z systems. You may disclose Information to your employees who have a need to know for the purposes of internally managing your IBM Z systems and who are bound to comply with these terms and has registered for access to the Portal. You may disclose Information to the extent required by law, but You must first give IBM prompt notice to allow Us a reasonable opportunity to get a

protective order. Subject to the foregoing, You will not disclose this Information to others without IBM's prior written consent.

Why can't IBM support answer questions about security vulnerabilities, even when I tell them I have access to the Security Portal?

The Security Portal is the single source for security information provided to all registered customers. Each customer decides who in their company should have access to the information provided as this information can put their enterprise at risk. These individuals go through a vetting process and access controls are put in place to permit their viewing sensitive information after agreeing to Terms and Conditions. The support team can not verify who they are talking to or the status of their access to the Security Portal. That list is dynamic and kept confidential.

When can I expect updates to the Security Portal?

The Security Portal is monitored to ensure the data that is provided is accurate. This means that the Security Portal would not be updated on US holidays and weekends unless there is a Global Threat that must be addressed.

Registration & Access

Who needs access to the Security Portal?

IBM strongly recommends that every IBM Z client with a need-to-know register and subscribe to the Security Portal. A best practice would be to register more than one person, ensuring coverage for various out of office scenarios, such as, vacations, shift work, global time zones, etc. It is also important to ensure coverage across roles, including but not limited to security officer, auditor, system programmer. However, each client needs to review their security policy and evaluate how best to integrate IBM Z security patch management and information into their enterprise security strategy.

How do I gain access to the Security Portal?

The instructions for access to the Security Portal can be found at:

<https://ibm.biz/security-portal-registration>.

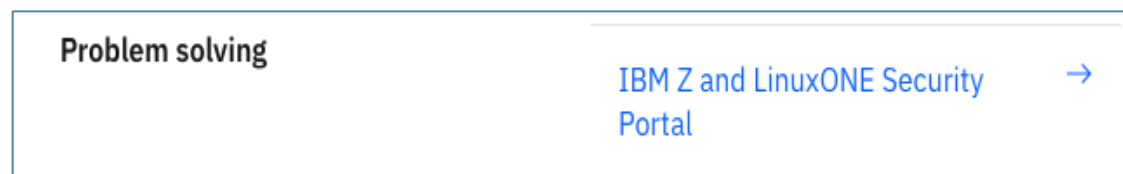
What can I expect once I submit a request for registration to the Security Portal?

Once you fill out the registration form on the web site (<https://ibm.biz/security-portal-registration>), entering all the required information, the IBM team will begin the vetting process. They will reach out to your IBM or Business Partner representative for their assistance. The team will verify that your company has an IBM Z or IBM® LinuxONE machine and associated operating system license. The IBM or Business Partner representative will then reach out to management at the requesting company to ensure the understanding and agreement to the Terms and Conditions. Once the agreement is in place and the required data, such as your IBMid, is provided the registration is approved. When the automation completes, a note with instructions is sent to the requestor's email address associated with their IBMid.

Failure to include the name and email of your IBM or Business Partner representative, or incorrect information, may cause significant delays in processing your registration request.

My registration email was misplaced, and I can't find the Security Portal?

The link for Portal Registration is often confused with the link to the actual security Portal which is hosted on ResourceLink®. If the customer successfully registers for access to the Security Portal, they would have gotten an email with the link (<https://ibm.biz/ibm-z-security-portal>) and instructions. Once you are authenticated, scroll down to the "Problem Solving" section and select "IBM Z and IBM® LinuxONE Security Portal" as seen here.



If you follow this link and have not registered for access, you will see the following message.

IBM Z and LinuxONE Security Portal

Stay informed about security patch data, associated CVSS ratings for new APARs and Security Notices.

[Register for the mainframe security portal](#)



[Learn more about the portal](#)



What is the difference between being authorized and subscribed to the Security Portal?

Authorization is granted to the Security Portal once a client has completed the registration process. To meet the requirements of our clients this process ensures that only the correct individuals that have a need to know in the client's organization can gain access to the information they need to properly maintain their IBM Z or IBM® LinuxONE environments.

Once a client is authorized you have the option to subscribe to the IBM Z and IBM® LinuxONE Security Portal to receive notifications via email. IBM strongly recommends you subscribe. The notification will let you know when information is added or updated. This means if any cumulative files or notices are updated the subscriber will get an email notifying them what has been updated. No sensitive information is provided via email. If a client chooses not to subscribe, they must be vigilant in checking for new posts to the Security Portal on a regular basis.

From the Security Portal landing page, you can click the "Subscribe" button to receive a non-confidential email when there is anything new or updated in the Security Portal.

Can zPDT or other emulator users register for access to the Security Portal?

No, the Security Portal is for IBM clients that have a licensed IBM Z or IBM® LinuxONE server. It is not intended for users of emulators, such as zPDT, zRD&T, etc. using the z/OS ADCD, z/VM ADCD, or equivalent. The ADCD environment is not intended to be serviced, but is designed to be replaced regularly, as updates are tested and made available.

I am a Business Partner can I access the Security Portal?

As a Business Partner if you own an IBM Z or IBM® LinuxONE machine and associated operating system license you would be considered a customer. If you do not own an IBM Z or IBM® LinuxONE machine you would not have a need to know. The customer with the need to know would be the owner of that machine.

I am a contractor, business partner or work for an outsourcing company managing an IBM Z or IBM® LinuxONE systems for another company. Can I access the Security Portal?

We will need the manager responsible for your contract at the company that has a licensed IBM Z or IBM® LinuxONE system to be part of the request for access. They will be a critical part

of the registration process as we evaluate the contract and its coverage of the Security Portal Terms and Conditions.

They must recognize that the information contained in the Security Portal is IBM confidential and as a condition to being granted access to the portal, they have agreed to terms and conditions presented on the portal that, among other things, this prohibits the sharing of such information with third parties.

My company has hired an outside auditor who, while performing their audit, requires access to my company's books, records, and systems in order that they may render an opinion. Would this auditor be considered a third party, and can I give them access to IBM's confidential information on or from the portal?

The auditor would be a third party and absent IBM's consent, you may not disclose to them IBM confidential information.

How can I obtain IBM's consent to share information with a third party?

You must send an email to IBM at syszsec@us.ibm.com requesting consent to disclose IBM confidential information to a third-party auditor. In your email, you must acknowledge the confidentiality terms under which you have been granted access to the Security Portal, identify the auditor, and the specific IBM confidential information you seek to disclose. In addition, you must confirm in writing that you have entered into a written agreement with the auditor sufficient to require that the auditor treats the IBM confidential information in accordance with the terms and conditions on the Security Portal, including the nondisclosure obligations. IBM will consider your request, and in its sole discretion will decide whether to provide you such consent.

My company is an IBM Z customer as well as a services provider to others. We provide information technology (IT) services to many other companies that do not have access to the IBM Z Security Portal and therefore have not accepted the terms and conditions on the IBM Z Security Portal. Some of our customers are required by regulations to audit our security policies and practices as their IT services provider. How can we proceed with this audit and provide them with the information they need?

You must send an email to IBM at syszsec@us.ibm.com requesting consent to disclose IBM confidential information to a third-party auditor or your customer. In your email, you must acknowledge the confidentiality terms under which you have been granted access to the Security Portal, identify the auditor/customer, and the specific IBM confidential information you seek to disclose. In addition, you must confirm in writing that you have entered into a written agreement with the auditor/customer sufficient to require that the auditor/customer treats the IBM confidential information in accordance with the terms and conditions on the Security Portal, including the nondisclosure obligations. IBM will consider your request, and in its sole discretion will decide whether to provide you such consent.

I am a manager – can I get access?

Yes, a manager can gain access to the Security Portal. In this case their director or VP would be engaged to ensure the understanding and agreement to the Security Portal Terms and Conditions.

There is a team of people that needs this information, can we register a group or service ID?

Individuals must register for access to the Security Portal, since the individual and their management are agreeing to the terms and conditions. If the sensitive portal data went to a distribution list there is a possibility to add someone to that list that is not aware of the sensitivity of the data or the terms and conditions. It would also undermine the yearly re-validation process.

Who in my organization has access to the Security Portal?

We are happy to work with the management team in your organization to ensure the right people have access. In addition to the yearly vetting process, a manager in your organization that approves access can send an email to IBM.Z.Security.Portal.Registration@ibm.com requesting a list of those employees registered for access.

If I download information from the Security Portal, can I share it with the person who applies our maintenance?

It is common practice that the list of APARs/PTFs, security related or not, is applied by a person that is not in a security related role. It is important that they are not provide the security details, such as CVSS data, and are aware of the terms and conditions. They should only be provided with the APAR / PTF information for the patches that need to be applied regardless of their security categorization.

Once I am granted access to the Security Portal, do I have it for life?

No, your access is contingent on your continued employment at the company that vouched for your need to know and agreed to the security portal terms and conditions. IBM regularly initiates a revalidation process to ensure all users still have a need to know. Access cannot be transferred from one company to another, one employee to another, or for private use should your employment status change. If the last person with access to the Security Portal has left the company, we may engage your IBM Representative to find a new security contact and ensure continued access. IBM Z customers should extend their security process to guarantee they have the coverage they need to maintain their security policy and practices. Customers are also encouraged to regularly review their list of employees with access and update IBM at IBM.Z.Security.Portal.Registration@ibm.com with additions or deletions.

I am only interested in the hardware or z/VM information, but it is hard to narrow down what is important to me in the Security Portal. Is there an easier way to see only the information I need?

The latest version of the Security Portal has introduced a new access control model where customers can request access to z/OS, z/VM and/or Hardware records. The default for most registrants is currently all three groups, but moving forward, depending on your license agreements with IBM, you may request which of these areas is of most interest, allowing you to focus only on your area of responsibility. To alter your access please send a note to IBM.Z.Security.Portal.Registration@ibm.com with a subject of "Access Control".

Security Portal Content

How does the SECINT Enhanced HOLDDATA compare with Enhanced HOLDDATA from other sources?

Clients can only get Security / Integrity (SECINT) HOLDDATA for z/OS from the Security Portal. Non-Security related Enhanced HOLDDATA can be downloaded separately from another source (<https://ibm.biz/zos-holddata>). Together, using SMP/E, these two sources can help provide a complete picture of what updates are available for a given z/OS system.

How is SECINT Enhanced HOLDDATA used?

For z/OS the Security Portal provides enhanced HOLDDATA for Security / Integrity APARs. This data is used as input to SMP/E along with the generally available non-Security / Integrity HOLDDATA. Together, these two files will be used as input to SMP/E and will provide a report for the IBM Z patch management team. Clients can use this data to help ensure their various z/OS environments are up to date and they know what APARs need to be installed to keep current with service.

What information is provided in the z/OS CVSS data file?

This file contains an aggregated list of security and system integrity APARs for z/OS. It contains CVSS information that can be used to help determine the urgency and applicability of a security fix to your system. Specifically, it includes for each Security / Integrity APAR the associated CVSS Base and Temporal scores to help determine the urgency and the CVSS Vector to address the applicability to your environment based on mitigating factors, workload, impact to the business, or other aspect that affect your enterprise or security policy.

For more information on this security fix data, see this introductory [video](#).

More information about CVSS scores and the CVSS Vector can be found in this FAQ and on the FIRST web site (<https://www.first.org/cvss/>).

What information is provided in a z/OS HOLDDATA record?

In this record you will find the applicable z/OS FMID, and the security or integrity APAR number included after the REASON keyword. In the COMMENT you will find the PTF number follows the FIX keyword and, when applicable, the CVSS base and temporal score might follow the SYMP keyword. If you are curious about the date of an APAR in the HOLDDATA records, there is a DATE (YYJJJ) field, where YY = the last two digits of the year and JJJ is the Julian date of the last update to the record.

How can I view the files attached to the various records in the Security Portal?

The most important records in the IBM Z and LinuxONE Security Portal contain files that are updated on a regular basis as necessary. Some of these files, like the CVSS and z/VM data, are intended to be read by humans, while the z/OS HOLDDATA file is intended for computer processing. Files, such as “*date secint.holds*”, “*date secint.cvss*” or “*date vvinteg.txt*”, are all plain text files that can be viewed on any platform that can view a plain text ASCII file. They were intentionally created as plain text to eliminate any requirement on a particular hardware platform or software product. If the files are difficult to read due to the formatting of columns use a fixed width (non-proportional) font such as “courier” for viewing.

What are Security Notices and how do they differ from the HOLDDATA and CVSS files provided separately?

Security Notices, introduced in 2014, are text (bulletin-like) documents provided on the Security Portal used to communicate information for highly publicized vulnerabilities that may generate a high degree of public or media attention. They are also used to communicate information regarding vulnerabilities for products that do not participate in the SMP/E process. In addition, Security Notices may be used to communicate new or critical information that may be needed to ensure the overall security of IBM Z in the enterprise. The Security APAR information (HOLDDATA, CVSS and ASSIGN files) are provided to evaluate the IBM Z products that provide fixes via the SMP/E process.

Security Notices are also used to communicate security related updates and best practices for IBM Z Hardware & Firmware.

Security Notices will be in the format SN-YYYY-NNN, where YYYY is the year of the vulnerability and NNN represents the sequential number of the Security Notice. There are times when related Security Notices are grouped under the same sequential number and differentiated by a point number, such as SN-YYYY-NNN.1, SN-YYYY-NNN.2, etc.

How long is security data available on the Security Portal?

The z/OS CVSS data, HOLDDATA, ASSIGN data, and z/VM APAR/CVSS data files are currently provided with a three-year rolling window. The data in these files is presented in ascending date order, most recent date at the bottom. Security Notices, on the “Security notices” tab and individual APAR records, on the “APARs” tab, currently have no expiration date.

If I apply security and integrity maintenance regularly, am I safe?

Not all critical fixes are security or integrity related. You should take a holistic approach to patch management and regularly review HIPER, PE, and security/integrity fixes via the combined Enhanced HOLDDATA (see <https://ibm.biz/zos-preventative-maintenance> for additional information) and the Security and Integrity HOLDDATA from the Security Portal.

How can I rate or prioritize IBM Z APARs for installation in my enterprise?

We have adopted the use of the CVSS (Common Vulnerability Scoring System) to help clients better understand the nature and relative criticality of APARs. Further information about CVSS and a guide to scoring can be found on the FIRST (Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams) web site (<http://www.first.org/cvss/>). Base and Temporal scores are provided. If an Environmental score is required this must be computed by the client using the provided CVSS vector, taking into consideration their enterprise environment and a system-by-system evaluation.

What version of CVSS is used in the Security Portal?

When the IBM Z Security Portal became available, CVSS version 2 (V2) was in common use. If no version number is specified in the CVSS Vector string, then that Base score and Vector is derived using CVSS V2. When the version 3 (V3) specification was introduced by FIRST, the “CVSS:3.0”, and “CVSS:3.1” prefix was added to the Vector string to differentiate between V2, V3.0, V3.1, and future versions of the CVSS specification.

With the transition to CVSS V4, FIRST has change the metrics used. There is no longer a temporal score available. For version 4 scores we will state NA (Not Applicable) for the temporal score where appropriate, to minimize automation breakage.

See the following for examples of CVSS Vectors:

Sample CVSS V2 Vector: (AV:L/AC:L/Au:N/C:P/I:N/A:N)

Sample CVSS V3 Vector: (CVSS:3.0/AV:N/AC:H/PR:N/UI:R/S:U/C:L/I:L/A:L)

Sample CVSS V3.1 Vector: (CVSS:3.1/AV:N/AC:H/PR:N/UI:R/S:U/C:L/I:L/A:L)

Sample CVSS V4.0 Vector:

(CVSS:4.0/AV:L/AC:L/AT:N/PR:N/UI:P/VC:L/VI:L/VA:L/SC:N/SI:N/SA:N)

Are the fixes for the Security / Integrity information found in the Security Portal included in the RSU?

Yes, the Security / Integrity fixes are also included in the RSU on the same schedule as other critical service, such as PE and HIPER fixes. Using the Security Portal, however, gives you a chance to see the Security / Integrity APARs once they are closed and assess the risk early (using the new CVSS data).

There may be some that you might determine need to be applied before the RSU is available. Our goal is to help ensure you have the data as soon as possible to make the best decisions for your enterprise.

How can I assess the risk associated with a particular APAR?

At times clients have asked IBM to rank APARs as high, medium or low severity, to help them assess the risk of a given APAR. This has always been a concern since IBM Z has such a vast and

diverse set of customers and workloads. We could not envision ranking an exposure in a way that was meaningful to all customers, workloads or enterprise environments. After evaluating this requirement further, it became evident that using the Common Vulnerability Scoring System (CVSS) would give our clients the data they needed to better evaluate the risk of an APAR with regard to their individual system and workload needs, while still maintaining the confidentiality of the vulnerability details. Each APAR is assigned a CVSS Base score and Vector. The Base score is used to get a preliminary idea of the urgency of the APAR while the Vector is used to better understand the applicability of the APAR to a particular enterprise environment.

How can I use the CVSS Vector to better understand how an APAR or fix might apply to my IBM Z environment?

The CVSS Vector contains information or metrics that capture the characteristics of the potential vulnerability. These metrics include, but are not limited to, the access vector, attack complexity and a measure of impact to confidentiality, integrity, and availability to a vulnerable system. Depending on the workload and or other security measures, process, or policies in place these metrics may indicate the level of risk.

The following table is provided for demonstration purposes only and does not replace the detailed explanations provided by FIRST (Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams) in their CVSS specification documents. One means for determining the applicability of a vulnerability might be to better understand the workload on that system and what impact metrics are critical to the service level agreement (SLA). Visualizing the vulnerability with colors might help identify the “hot” spots that attributed to the Base score. Using the following chart, we will consider the impact of each metric using the associated color on a few example CVSS Vectors.

CVSS Version 2 Metric		Values		
		Bad	Worse	Worst
AV	Access Vector	Local	Adjacent Network	Network
AC	Access Complexity	High	Medium	Low
C	Confidentiality Impact	None	Partial	Complete
I	Integrity Impact	None	Partial	Complete
A	Availability Impact	None	Partial	Complete

Examples:

Base Score	Vector
7.2	(AV:L/AC:L/C:C/I:C/A:C)
3.6	(AV:L/AC:L/C:P/I:P/A:N)
5.8	(AV:N/AC:M/C:P/I:P/A:N)

In the first example, you can see how the complete impact on confidentiality, integrity and availability impacts the score in contrast to it being a local attack vector. On the other hand, we see in the last example that a partial impact to confidentiality and integrity may be more critical since this is a network attack. Each vector helps in the evaluation of the applicability of a fix and can only be fully understood when the systems, their workloads and other mitigating security measures are considered.

Please note the above table and examples use CVSS Version 2 for simplicity. The CVSS data in the Security Portal may be version 2, 3.0, 3.1 or 4.0 depending on the origin and time frame of the vulnerability.

I noticed a new cross reference file that contains an SIA number. Who is this for and what is an SIA number?

A Security Integrity APAR (SIA) number is a number that is generated and used to communicate with clients that have a contract with IBM to manage their IBM Z environments. The SIA number is a way of identifying a Security or System Integrity APAR in a client’s change management system without disclosing any IBM confidential APAR information. IBM has no control over who might have access to a client owned change management system or how they might propagate that data and IBM must protect all APAR information to minimize risk for all IBM Z clients. The client personnel that have demonstrated a need to know must be vetted through the normal process to gain access to the IBM Z Security Portal, agreeing to the terms and conditions of the portal. In the portal they can view the cross-reference file and gain access to the rest of the customer accessible APAR information.

Occasionally I see multiple records in the CVSS or HOLDDATA file with identical APAR information, is this a mistake?

From time to time, you may see an APAR with identical information in the CVSS file or multiple ++HOLDS for the same APAR with the same FMID across multiple days. One possibility is when an APAR has multiple PTFs (multiple release levels) and the PTFs are not all “Closed” on the same day, there can be two PTFs for the same APAR on multiple days with identical information. Since the COR Closing is an automated process, it is possible that one PTF closes just before midnight and the other PTF closes just after, posting them minutes apart, but on separate days, or for other reasons, all resolving PTFs are not “Closed” on the same day. Another possibility is that the APAR is included in the Superseding APARs section of a PTF superseding the first PTF.

This could trigger and send another notification when there is another COR Closed PTF fixing the same APAR.

In either case, the information is correct, and SMP/E will correctly process the HOLDDATA.

I am not using the vulnerable function; do I still need to install the fix?

Yes, if the vulnerable function is installed on the system it needs to be updated with the latest service. A hacker or malicious user can exploit any vulnerable code that is installed on a system, not just the code you are using. It is critical to keep any code that is installed on a system up to date whether that function is used or not by current processes, because attacks can take on many forms and employ unused and unpatched code as an entry point, pass through, or launch pad for a multi-step attack.

What happens when a Security fix is PE?

When a security or system integrity fix contains an error, it is marked PE (PTF in Error) just like any other APAR. When investigating PEs which involve security or integrity fixes, customers can use the CVSS Base score, and metrics/vector data contained in the security portal, to determine if removing a SEC/INT PTF is preferable to leaving the PE on the system until a new fix is available. For PEs where the new error is not also a security/integrity, there will be a public APAR with additional details to help determine how best to handle the PTF in error until a new fix can be installed.

FMIDs are nice, but how can I map them to product names we know?

There is a mapping of FMID to known name in the “secint.cvss.enhanced” file. This file can be found on the “Primary resources” tab in the “z/OS Security/Integrity CVSS” record. This file is in CSV format which lends its use to be easily automated, imported to popular spreadsheet or database tools or manually searched.

How do I get the z/OS PTFs described in the Sec/int HOLDDATA?

Many customers use the SMP/E RECEIVE ORDER command, also known as SMP/E Internet Service Retrieval (<https://www.ibm.com/docs/en/zos/3.2.0?topic=guide-preparing-use-internet-service-retrieval>) to acquire PTFs for their z/OS stack of products. This method can be automated by customers so they can acquire PTFs in the background with little or no manual effort.

There is a new Primary resource for CSAF Data, what can this do for me?

The Cyber Security Advisory Framework (CSAF) data provided under the Primary Resources tab provides a zip file for APAR's aggregating security information for Sec/Int=Y APAR's for z/OS products that deliver their fixes by PTF. This information includes CVE, CWE, and CVSS information related to each of these APAR's. Each APAR has a unique JSON document in accordance with the CSAF 2.0 standard, but for reference, a JSON Schema for the z/OS-centric use cases here in the IBM Z and Linux One Security Portal is also available for download under this same resource. Since JSON documents are well understood and the CSAF standard is open,

this allows for integration with lots of tools or automation utilities. Please see the body of text under the primary resource itself for updates on the available data and its delivery.

The CSAF data provided for z/OS looks daunting, how can this data be easily consumed?

The IBM Z and LinuxONE Security Portal Primary resources can be consumed in various ways to help meet the wide-ranging needs of our customers and their Security Policies. Any of the files on the Primary resources tab are candidates for automated download to your system of choice and can be consumed in many creative ways to get the right data, in the right format, to make the right security decisions for your enterprise. Python is an option if you want to do your automation and analysis on IBM Z with z/OS or zLinux. If you don't have the skills or resources available, this is a great opportunity for an intern, or your favorite AI to generate the code to process the data needed to elevate your insights into your mainframe workloads. Possible list of steps to accomplish this goal are as follows:

- Use the provided JSON scheme for the CSAF data (csaf_zos_json_scheme) to understand what data you have available.
- Interrogate the directory of products created by expanding the zip file (ex.zip) to get the detailed security information for each APAR.
- The ERRSYSMOD Report for SMPE can be used to generate a list of PTFs that are missing from your system and help focus you on what Security information is pertinent and provide a risk analysis.
- Create a profile for each system using the workloads to identify the risk for that environments or that workloads tolerance for impact with regards to Confidentiality, Integrity and Availability This will help add additional value to understanding risk based on CVSS metrics for CIA.
- Create a table of products with missing service (PTFs) and the associated Urgency (CVSS Base Score) and Applicability (CVSS Metrics that impact that workload) for each APAR based on the workloads and their acceptable risk for CIA.

You can process CSAF data in an automated way to provide a table, CSV, DB, dashboard, etc. of the data that is important to you. This opens the door to creating a more granular risk analysis of each workload environment based on missing service with urgency indicated by CVSS base score and using the CVSS metrics to identify things like the attack vector and CIA (Confidentiality, integrity, availability) risk. For example, you can create a dashboard that highlights the PTFs that have a critical or high CVSS severity (base score) in red for easy identification of risk.

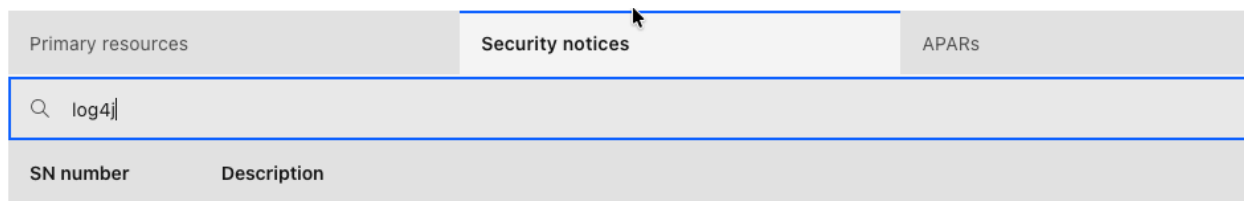
Navigating the Portal

I am having trouble locating the latest information in the Security formation that is relevant to my enterprise role. How can I better navigate the Security Portal?

As the Security Portal has grown over time the volume and type of data that is provided has expanded. We continue to work closely with clients to help provide a portal experience that meets their needs. The Security Portal has a new look and feel with the use of category tabs, enhanced search, sort and filter capabilities. The Security Portal landing page has three tabs (Primary resources, Security notices, and APARs) to better direct your query based on your role. The Primary resources tab is where you will find the Enhanced HOLDDATA, Common Vulnerability Scoring System (CVSS) and Security Integrity APAR(SIA) cross reference files [discussed later in this document]. The Security Notice and APAR tabs provide greater detail, and we now provide the ability to sort on data or number and filter on key terms like z/OS, z/VM, WebSphere®, etc. to help get you to the information you need faster. The Search capability has also been refined to better highlight content within the Resource Link site.

How do I find a Security Notice?

Once signed in to ResourceLink (<https://ibm.biz/ibm-z-security-portal>) navigate (select "Problem Solving" then "Security Alerts") to the Security Portal (you will only see the IBM Z data if registered) you can access the Security Notices (click the "Security Notices" tab in the middle of the page). Typing "log4j" in the Filter entries box will give you the list of all the Log4j Security Notices.

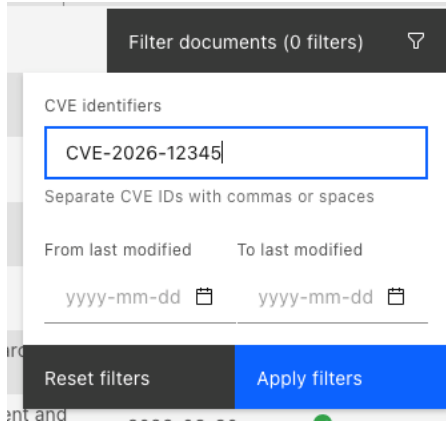


It was recommended that I continue to monitor the Security Portal for updates. How often should I check?

You can choose to monitor the Security Portal on a schedule depending on your company's Security Process, however, IBM suggests that you Subscribe to the Security Portal. When you subscribe you will get an email with a link every time there is a new entry or update.

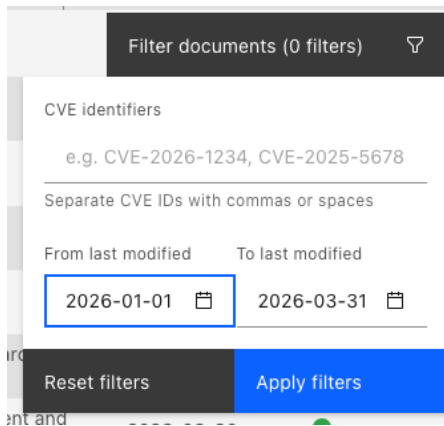
How can I search CVEs in a Security Notice?

A new function has been added in 2026 to help Security Portal users locate what Security Notices may address a particular CVE. On the Security notices Tab, you can now type a CVE number in the "Filter documents" filter. It is on the right side of the filter bar (see below example). A comma separated list of CVEs can be entered and once applied will return security notices that contain information pertaining to those CVEs.



I do service every quarter, how can I find out what Security Notices have been published during that time?

A new function has been added in 2026 to help Security Portal users narrow down what fixes might be relevant to their enterprise during a specified period of time. You can now enter a start and end date for what time window you want to review. See below for an example showing how to get the list of Security Notices for the first quarter of 2026.



It looks like older Security Notices are no longer visible. What happened?

To maximize performance for the initial page load it was necessary to highlight the most recent Security Notices. All the Security Notices are still there, you can use the new Filter documents option mentioned in the previous question to expand the list of Security Notices.

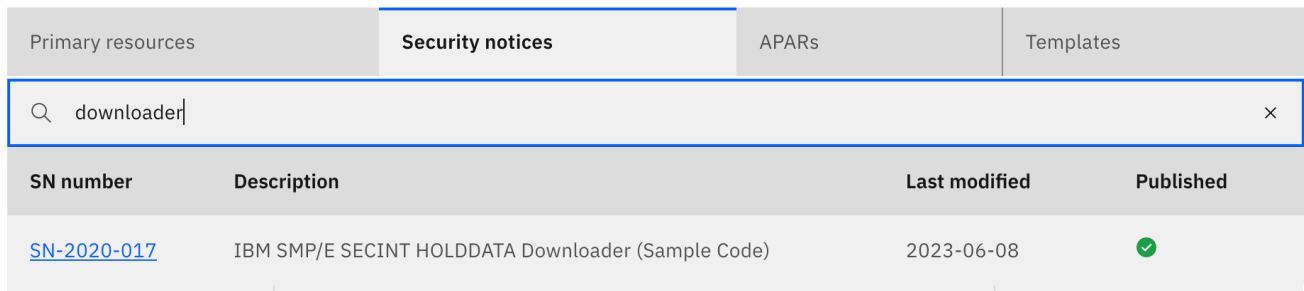
Portal Automation

Do I have to manually download files from the portal?

The integration of key files, such as HOLDDATA & ASSIGN data to support client Security Policies is critical. While some choose to do this as a manual process, others have asked for an automated integration directly to their IBM Z environment. We have provided a sample Python script, called the “IBM SMP/E SECINT HOLDDATA Downloader (Sample Code)”, to aid in automating the integration of the security portal. The sample script is found in the Security Portal.

Where can I find the sample automation code?

In the following screen shot you can see how selecting the “Security notices” tab in the middle of the screen and using the “Filter entries” option to enter “downloader” brings you right to the Security Notice (SN-2020-017) with the sample code and instructions.



SN number	Description	Last modified	Published
SN-2020-017	IBM SMP/E SECINT HOLDDATA Downloader (Sample Code)	2023-06-08	✓

There is also a quick link to this Security Notice under the “Primary resources” tab as seen below:



IBM SMP/E SECINT HOLDDATA Downloader (Sample Code)	2023-06-08	✓
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Please see the README for important set up instructions.

How do I use the sample automation code?

To better allow for automation, the download uses a user-generated token for authentication rather than IBMid credentials. Once you have access to the Portal, to utilize the automated download send an email to SysZSec@us.ibm.com with the subject line “Portal Downloader ID Enablement” and your IBMid. We will enable your ID to generate this token. Once you have this token, please see the README for command-line arguments, common errors, and other important usage information.

My automation script stopped working on May 29th, 2024, what happened?

Due to the migration of Resource Link, version 4.0 (portal_downloader_v4.0) or higher is required to continue using the automated download. There is also additional set up that is needed to continue to use this downloader. Please see SN-2020-17 and the attached README for instructions to continue usage.

I heard there is a way to get SEC/INT HOLDDATA via the RECEIVE ORDER process, how does this work?

As of October 2025 when an SMP/E RECEIVE ORDER request is sent to the IBM server for a user that is permitted to access the IBM Z and LinuxONE Security Portal, the order content will automatically include the IBM Confidential SECINT HOLDDATA and ASSIGN statements. Your SMP/E RECEIVE ORDER command must use an IBM Shopz (https://www.ibm.com/software/shopzseries/ShopzSeries_public.wss) generated user certificate that is associated with the same IBM id that is permitted for access to the IBM Z and LinuxONE Security Portal. When an SMP/E RECEIVE ORDER request is sent to the IBM server for a user that is not permitted to access the Security Portal, the order content will not include the IBM Confidential SECINT HOLDDATA and ASSIGN statements. There is no change to the process or order content for those that are not permitted to the Security Portal.

You can review the Support pages (<https://www.ibm.com/support/pages/node/7248201>) or the Security Notice (See SN-2025-167) for more information.

My company's Security Policy does not allow me to store a User ID and Password in a file; is there a way I can still use automation to download Primary resources?

A token with scoped access can be used to authenticate for automation so you do not need to use your IBMid. To avoid storing, credentials can be passed to the download script via command line or prompted for during execution. The downloader script can also be modified to accept credentials passed via stdin to integrate it with existing frameworks your company has for securely saving credentials.

Global Threat Communication

What can I expect when there is a Global Threat?

When IBM Z addresses a Global Threat a Security Notice will be created with the format SN-YYYY-nnn, where YYYY is the current year and nnn is the next sequential number. We will then have a sub-notice noting all the products under investigation with format of SN-YYYY-nnn.0 (dot zero), the Under Investigation list. Once investigation is complete the product will be removed from the Under Investigation list and a sub-notice will be created for every product that requires a fix or mitigation with the format of SN-YYYY-nnn.x, where x will be sequential starting with 1. If the Product is not on the under-investigation list and there is no Security Notice, there is not a concern for the product.

Every update to these security notices will generate a notification email to the customer with a link to the update, if they have subscribed to notifications.

How can I find information for a Global Threat?

The Security Portal provides a filter function, identified by a magnifying glass, which enables quick access to a set of Security Notices, for example entering "Log4j" in the filter box provides the complete list of IBM Z relevant Security Notices (hardware, firmware, operating system, software, etc.) in one spot.

Primary resources	Security notices	APARs	Templates
🔍 log4j ×			
SN number	Description	Last modified	Published

Some products state they are NOT affected, or companies provide lists of their NOT affected products. Why does IBM Z utilize an Under Investigation list scheme?

Public “Unaffected Lists” used by some in the industry caused a lot of confusion as products were added and removed over time. Something was added, then a customer saw they were not affected and walked away, but days later more was learned about the vulnerability and the product was taken off the list, but the customer did not know to look again. For IBM Z, we used an under-investigation list and Security Notice process. If there was no Security Notice and the product was not on the under-investigation list, there was no concern. The list of vulnerable products was small compared to unaffected, so it was also easier to view the small list of products. If the list was updated, customers who subscribe, got an email Notification of the change.

Why is there no "Not Applicable" list for CVEs during a Global Threat?

In the IBM Z and IBM® LinuxONE Security Portal when there is a Global threat there will be a Security Notice (SN-YYYY-xxx.0) for products under investigation and then there will be a Security Notice if there is a fix needed. If the product is not in the Under Investigation List and there is no Security Notice, then there is no concern for the stated global threat. When you consider there are over 1000 products / versions that run on IBM Z and IBM® LinuxONE the matrix of Not Applicable entries would be huge compared to the small number of products identified with Security Notices. The provided Filter function quickly highlights the area where fixes need to be applied, removing any distraction from the critical information that needs to be shared.

Communications

If my question is not addressed in this FAQ, how can I get an answer?

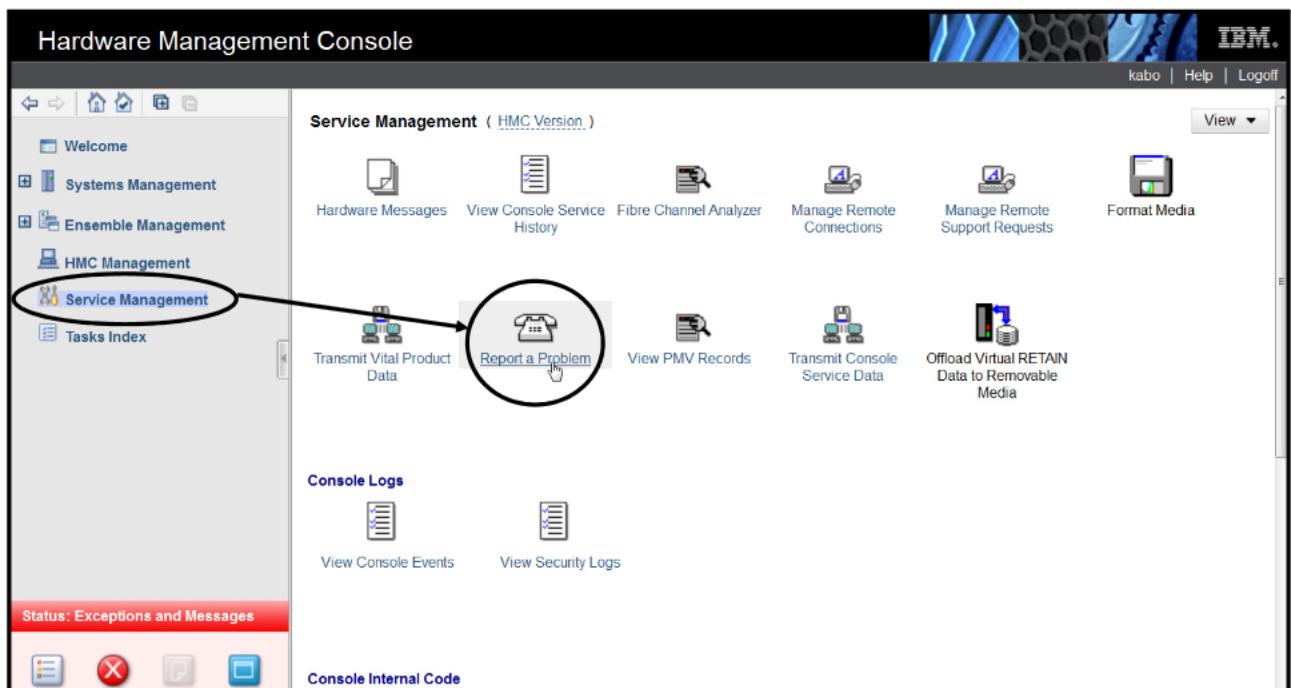
You can send an email to syszsec@us.ibm.com if you have questions about the IBM Z Security Portal. To ensure your question is routed to the appropriate team, please make sure you have "Question: Z Security Portal" in the Subject field of the email.

When do I open a Case with service?

If you have applied all the service and followed the guidance from the Security Portal for the product in question and you have a scan report, penetration test, etc. identifying a security vulnerability in an IBM Z or IBM® LinuxONE product you should follow the normal support process, sharing the details from the scan, pen test, etc., so the security concern can be investigated and a fix provided, if needed, or it can be identified as a false positive.

To report a potential new vulnerability, you can open a case in [the Cognitive Support Platform \(CSP\)](#) or use the IBM Z's HMC's "Report a Problem" task (see figure below) as appropriate. This will allow IBM to route the concern to the appropriate team, investigate, and provide a fix if needed or determine it is a false positive.

Tree Style View for HMC Report a Problem



Please note that IBM support does not have access to the Security Portal content or access to any available LIC fix information. Vulnerability information is shared with customers via the Security Portal only, where the user's access is verified. Support cannot confirm, nor deny, any security vulnerability questions.



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05/26

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