Security Advisory

K000156741: BIG-IP APM vulnerability CVE-2025-53521

Published Date: **Oct 15, 2025** Updated Date: **Mar 29, 2026**

AI Recommended Content

Evaluated products:

Security Advisory Description

When a BIG-IP APM access policy is configured on a virtual server, specific malicious traffic can lead to Remote Code Execution (RCE). (CVE-2025-53521)

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Impact

This is an issue impacting BIG-IP APM systems.

This vulnerability allows an unauthenticated attacker to perform remote code execution. The BIG-IP system in Appliance mode is also vulnerable. This is a data plane issue; there is no control plane exposure.

Note: This known vulnerability was previously categorized and remediated as a Denial-of-Service (DoS) vulnerability with CVSS scores of 7.5 (CVSS v3.1) and 8.7 (CVSS v4.0).

Due to new information obtained in March 2026, the original vulnerability is being re-categorized to an RCE with CVSS scores of 9.8 (CVSS v3.1) and 9.3 (CVSS v4.0).

The original CVE remediation has been validated to address the RCE in the fixed versions listed below.

Important: We have learned that this vulnerability has been exploited in the vulnerable BIG-IP versions below.

We recommend reviewing the K000160486: Indicators of Compromise for c05d5254 in systems that:

- Were upgraded from a vulnerable version to a fixed version
- Are running a vulnerable version

Note: Systems that were initially set up with a clean installation using a fixed BIG-IP version are not vulnerable.

If you suspect a security compromise on your BIG-IP system, review the following article: K11438344: Considerations and guidance when you suspect a security compromise on a BIG-IP system.

Security Advisory Status

F5 Product Development has assigned ID 1977933 (BIG-IP APM) to this vulnerability. This issue has been classified as **CWE-770: Allocation of Resources Without Limits or Throttling**.

To determine if your product and version have been evaluated for this vulnerability, refer to the **Evaluated products** box. To determine if your release is known to be vulnerable, the components or features that are affected by the vulnerability, and for information about releases, point releases, or hotfixes that address the vulnerability, refer to the following tables. You can also use **iHealth** to diagnose a vulnerability for BIG-IP, BIG-IQ, and F5OS systems. For more information about using iHealth, refer to **K27404821: Using F5 iHealth to diagnose vulnerabilities**. For more information about security advisory versioning, refer to **K51812227: Understanding security advisory versioning**.

In this section

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BIG-IP Next

Product	Branch	Versions known to be vulnerable[1]	Fixes introduced in	Severity/CVSS score	Vulnerable component or feature
BIG-IP Next SPK	All	None	Not applicable	Not vulnerable	None
BIG-IP Next CNF	All	None	Not applicable	Not vulnerable	None
BIG-IP Next for Kubernetes	All	None	Not applicable	Not vulnerable	None

*[1]F5 evaluates only software versions that have not yet reached the End of Technical Support (EoTS) phase of their lifecycle. For more information, refer to the **Security hotfixes** section of **K4602: Overview of the F5 security vulnerability response policy**.*

BIG-IP and BIG-IQ

***Note**: After F5 releases a fix for a given branch, that fix applies to all subsequent minor, maintenance, and point releases for that branch; F5 will not list additional fixes for that branch in the table. For example, when F5 releases a fix in 17.1.2.1, the fix also applies to 17.1.2.2 and all later 17.1.x releases (17.1.3.x, 17.1.4.x). For more information, refer to **K51812227: Understanding security advisory versioning**.*

Product	Branch	Versions known to be vulnerable[1]	Fixes introduced in	Severity/CVSS score[2]	Vulnerable component or feature
BIG-IP APM	17.x	17.5.0 - 17.5.1 17.1.0 - 17.1.2	17.5.1.3 17.1.3	**Critical/9.8**[3] (CVSS v3.1) **Critical/9.3**[3] (CVSS v4.0)	The **apmd** process
	16.x	16.1.0 - 16.1.6	16.1.6.1		
	15.x	15.1.0 - 15.1.10	15.1.10.8		
BIG-IP (all other modules)	All	None	Not applicable	Not vulnerable	None
BIG-IQ Centralized Management	All	None	Not applicable	Not vulnerable	None

*[1]F5 evaluates only software versions that have not yet reached the End of Technical Support (EoTS) phase of their lifecycle. For more information, refer to the **Security hotfixes** section in the F5 security vulnerability response policy.*

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*[2]Starting with the August 2024 Quarterly Security Notification, F5 will provide the CVSS v4.0 base score in addition to the CVSS v3.1 score, for first-party security issues only. The CVSS score will take you to a resource outside of MyF5, and the content may be removed without our knowledge. For content important to you, we encourage you to review CVSS v4.0. Refer to **K000140363: Overview of CVSS v4.0 in F5 security advisories**.*

[3]This known vulnerability was previously categorized and remediated as a DoS vulnerability with CVSS scores of 7.5 (CVSS v3.1) and 8.7 (CVSS v4.0). Due to new information obtained in March 2026, the original vulnerability is being re-categorized to an RCE with CVSS scores of 9.8 (CVSS v3.1) and 9.3 (CVSS v4.0). The original CVE remediation has been validated to address the issue for the recategorized RCE for the fixed versions listed above.

F5 Distributed Cloud and NGINX Services

Service	Severity/CVSS score	Vulnerable component or feature
F5 Distributed Cloud (all services)	Not vulnerable	None
F5 Silverline (all services)	Not vulnerable	None
NGINX One Console	Not vulnerable	None

F5OS

Product	Branch	Versions known to be vulnerable[1]	Fixes introduced in	Severity/CVSS score	Vulnerable component or feature

F5OS-A	All	None	Not applicable	Not vulnerable	None
F5OS-C	All	None	Not applicable	Not vulnerable	None

*[1]F5 evaluates only software versions that have not yet reached the End of Technical Support (EoTS) phase of their lifecycle. For more information, refer to the **Security hotfixes** section of **K4602: Overview of the F5 security vulnerability response policy**.*

NGINX

Product	Branch	Versions known to be vulnerable[1]	Fixes introduced in	Severity/CVSS score	Vulnerable component or feature
NGINX (all products)	All	None	Not applicable	Not vulnerable	None

*[1]F5 evaluates only software versions that have not yet reached the End of Technical Support (EoTS) phase of their lifecycle. For more information, refer to the **Security hotfixes** section of **K4602: Overview of the F5 security vulnerability response policy**.*

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Other products

Product	Branch	Versions known to be vulnerable[1]	Fixes introduced in	Severity/CVSS score	Vulnerable component or feature
Traffix SDC	All	None	Not applicable	Not vulnerable	None
F5 AI Gateway	All	None	Not applicable	Not vulnerable	None

*[1]F5 evaluates only software versions that have not yet reached the End of Technical Support (EoTS) phase of their lifecycle. For more information, refer to the **Security hotfixes** section of **K4602: Overview of the F5 security vulnerability response policy**.*

Security Advisory Recommended Actions

If you are running a version listed in the **Versions known to be vulnerable** column, you can eliminate this vulnerability by installing a version listed in the **Fixes introduced in** column. If the **Fixes introduced in** column does not list a version for your branch, then no update candidate currently exists for that branch and F5 recommends that you upgrade to a version with the fix (refer to the tables).

If the **Fixes introduced in** column lists a version prior to the one you are running, in the same branch, then your version should have the fix.

Note: We have learned that this vulnerability has been exploited in the vulnerable BIG-IP versions above.

If you did a clean installation of a fixed BIG-IP version, then your installation is not vulnerable.

If you have not upgraded to a fixed version or if you upgraded from a vulnerable BIG-IP version to a fixed BIG-IP version, we recommend you review the Indicators of Compromise K000160486: **https://my.f5.com/manage/s/article/K000160486**.

Important: F5 strongly recommends that you consult your corporate security policy for guidelines about incident handling procedures including but not limited to forensic best practices, that are specific to your organization. More specifically, review the policies to ensure that they comply with evidence collection and forensics procedures for a security incident before you attempt to recover the system. Additionally, if you do not know exactly when the system was compromised, your UCS backups may have been created afterward, or both, F5 strongly recommends that you rebuild the configuration from scratch because UCS files from compromised systems can contain persistent malware.

Mitigation

None

Acknowledgments

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Related Content

- K41942608: Overview of MyF5 security advisory articles
- K12201527: Overview of Quarterly Security Notifications
- K51812227: Understanding security advisory versioning
- K4602: Overview of the F5 security vulnerability response policy
- K4918: Overview of the F5 critical issue hotfix policy
- K39757430: F5 product and services lifecycle policy index
- K9502: BIG-IP hotfix and point release matrix
- K13123: Managing BIG-IP product hotfixes (11.x - 17.x)
- K000090258: Download F5 products from MyF5
- K9970: Subscribe to email notifications regarding F5 products and security announcements
- K9957: Creating a custom RSS feed to view new and updated documents
- K44525501: Overview of BIG-IP data plane and control plane
- K000135931: Contact F5 Support

AI Recommended Content

- Security Advisory - K000160486: Indicators of Compromise for c05d5254
- Knowledge - K11438344: Considerations and guidance when you suspect a security compromise on a BIG-IP system
- Security Advisory - K000156741: BIG-IP APM vulnerability CVE-2025-53521
- Knowledge - K00029945: Using the sys-eicheck (FIPS) utility

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