

Table Of Contents

Table Of Contents .....	1
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[Home](#) > [Faq](#) > [FAQ](#)

## Sendmail Limiting Denial of Service (DOS) Attack

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Q. I would like to know configuration directives that will limit Sendmail Denial of Service attack.

A. Sendmail is a mail transfer agent (MTA) i.e. that transfers electronic mail messages from one computer to another. It is possible that attacker can flood the mail server with DOS (it is an attack in which no access to the system(s) is gained, but rather a loss of service is incurred i.e. your mail server will die) attack.

To avoid DOS against Sendmail server it comes with directives that can be configured via sendmail.mc macro file.

Sendmail used in various UNIX and Linux environments.

From [Sendmail](#) <sup>[1]</sup>:

All descriptions are structured in the following way

M4 Variable Name/ Configuration/ Description & [Default]/Recommendation:

confMIN\_FREE\_BLOCKS

MinFreeBlocks

[100] Minimum number of free blocks on queue filesystem to accept SMTP mail. (Prior to 8.7, this was minfree/maxsize, where minfree was the number of free blocks and maxsize was the maximum message size. In current versions of sendmail, use confMAX\_MESSAGE\_SIZE for the second value.)

Recommended: 4000 or larger.

confMAX\_MESSAGE\_SIZE

MaxMessageSize

[infinite] The maximum size of messages that will be accepted (in bytes).

Recommended: 4MB (?)

confAUTO\_REBUILD

AutoRebuildAliases

[False] Automatically rebuild alias file if needed. There is a potential for a denial of service attack if this is set.

Set to False.

confQUEUE\_LA

QueueLA

[varies] Load average at which queue-only function kicks in. Default value is (8 \* numproc), where numproc is the number of processors online (if that can be determined).

Set to 10 (depending on CPU power).

confREFUSE\_LA

RefuseLA

[varies] Load average at which incoming SMTP connections are refused.

Default value is (12 \* numproc), where numproc is the number of processors online (if that can be determined).

Set to 8 (depending on CPU power).

confMAX\_DAEMON\_CHILDREN

MaxDaemonChildren

[undefined] The maximum number of children the daemon will permit. After this number, connections will be rejected. If not set or confMAX\_HEADERS\_LENGTH

MaxHeadersLength

[undefined] Maximum length of the sum of all headers.

Set to 32 or 64K

confMAX\_MIME\_HEADER\_LENGTH

MaxMimeHeaderLength  
[undefined] Maximum length of certain MIME header field values.  
Set to 1024 or less.

confMAX\_RCPTS\_PER\_MESSAGE  
MaxRecipientsPerMessage  
[infinite] If set, allows no more than the specified number of recipients in an SMTP envelope. Further recipients receive a 452 error code (i.e., they are deferred to the next delivery attempt).  
Site policy: 10 - 100.

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URLs in this post:

[1] Sendmail: <http://sendmail.com>

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