

Attacking Windows using RDP Blue Keep exploit and learning defence

Bluekeep is a critical Remote Code Execution vulnerability in Microsoft's RDP service running on TCP port 3389. It could allow an attacker to execute remote code on a vulnerable machine that's running Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP). As the vulnerability is wormable, it spread rapidly. By sending a specially crafted packet a memory corruption bug is created in the target machine. The attacker crashes the kernel which causes a blue screen of death on the victim machine resulting in a Denial of Service (DoS) attack. Due to RDP vulnerability on versions earlier than windows 8.1. an attacker can also execute remote code execution and by placing a backdoor on the victim machine, it gets compromised.

Affected machines with this vulnerability:

Windows 7, Windows Server 2008, Windows Vista, and Windows Server 2004 machines with RDP enabled.

In this exercise, you will learn about the blue keep vulnerability, and its exploitation resulting in a Denial of Service attack, indicators of compromise, mode of Detection, mitigation, and prevention technique for this attack.

Indicator of Attack (IOA)

Indicators of attack (IOAs) are some events that could reveal an active attack before indicators of compromise become visible. It is not always possible to detect Indicators of attack, as the attackers generally target your machines when you are not available with them.

IOAs disclose the motivations of the attacker and the specific tools used in each process.

Examples of Indicators of Attacks (IOA)

- I. Excessive SMTP traffic. Could be evidence of a compromised system being used to launch DDoS attacks.
- II. Malware reinfection within a few minutes of removal. This could be indicative of an Advanced Persistent Threat.
- III. Multiple user logins from different regions. This could be indicative of stolen user credentials.
- IV. Network scans by internal hosts communicating with multiple hosts in a short time frame, which could reveal an attacker moving laterally within the network.

Indicators of Compromise (IOCs)

Indicators of Compromise (IOC) are pieces of forensic data, such as data found in host-based log entries or files, that identify potentially malicious activity on a system or network. An IOC is an indication that can be used to indicate an intrusion or compromise of a host in a network. Examples of an IOC include unusual network traffic, unusual privileged user account activity, login anomalies, increases in database read volume, suspicious registry or system file changes, etc.

IOC can reveal:

- A. Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTP) used during a cyberattack.
- B. Severity of the event. Event severity is calculated based on the severity weight given in vulnerabilities.
- C. Where to focus incident response and mitigation

Incident response is an approach to handling security breaches. The aim of incident response is to identify an attack, contain the damage, and know the root cause of the incident.

D. Who are the threat actors?

A threat actor also called a malicious actor is an entity that is partially or wholly responsible for an incident that impacts – or has the potential to impact the security of an organization.

IOCs are a key source for:

1. Identification of an Advanced Persistent Threat (APT)
2. Indicating something is wrong with the network
3. Forensic identification of crime or attack
4. Understanding how a compromise occurred
5. Testing your system or network for vulnerabilities
6. Watch the Authentication Activity

Example: Anomalies in privileged account activity

Check the number of users created with administrator privilege

Guided Exercise

Checking the Vulnerability of the Windows machine for Bluekeep vulnerability

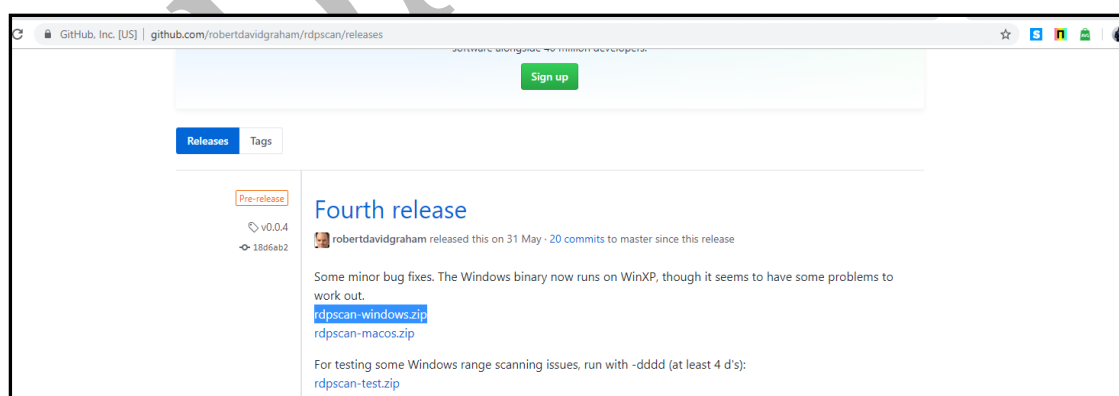
You can check your machine for RDP protocol related vulnerabilities using the RDP scan tool.

Testing your machine for Bluekeep vulnerability using RDPScan:

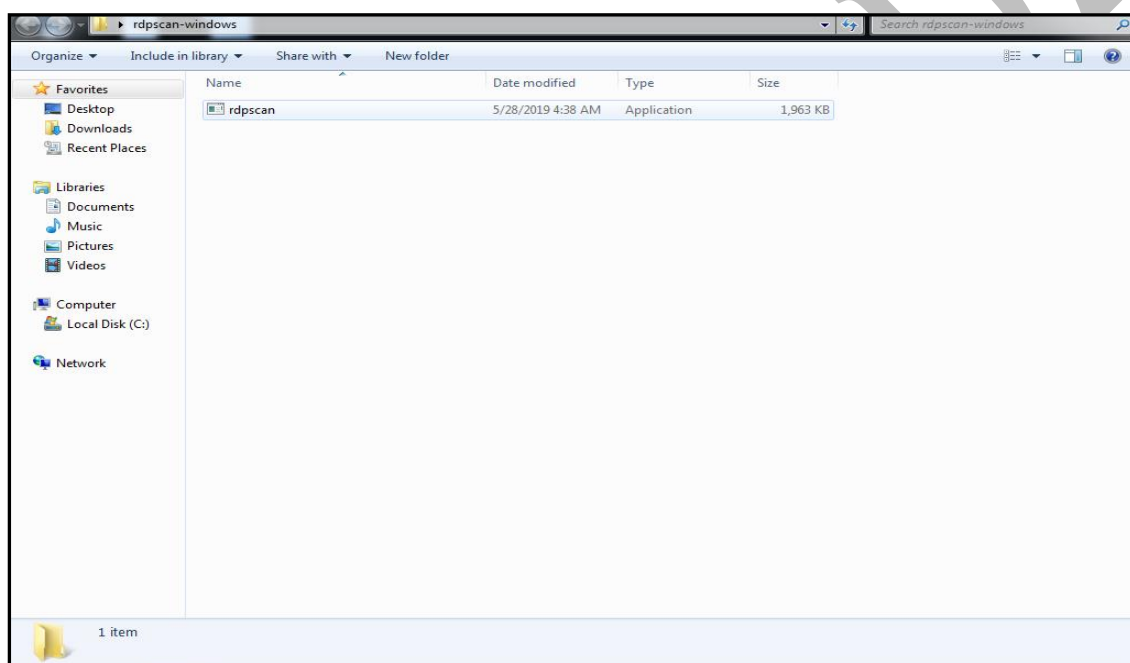
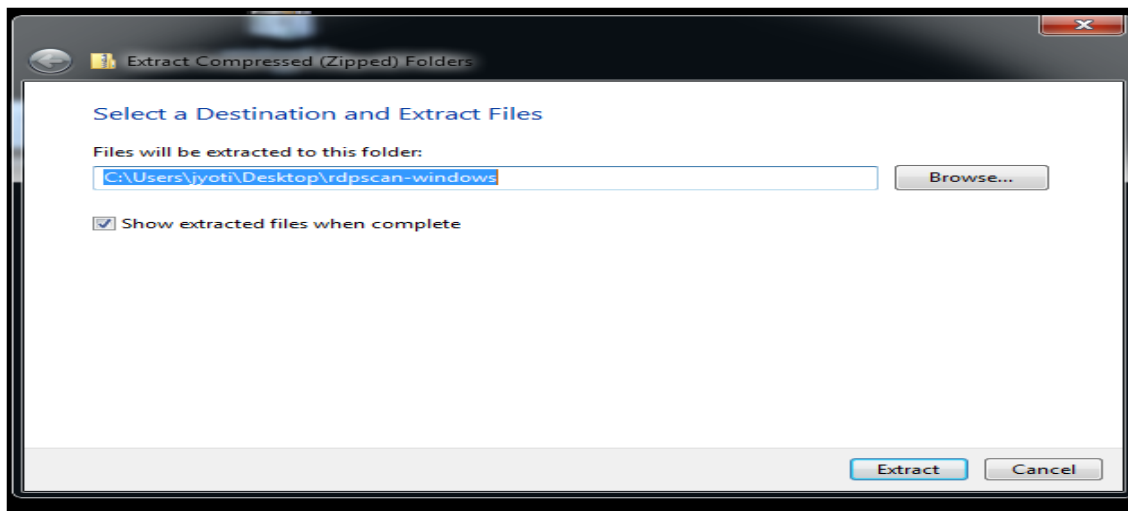
RDPScan is a free tool available to check this vulnerability.

Step1. Download the latest version from the below link

<https://github.com/robertdavidgraham/rdpscan/releases>



Extract the file of rdpscan-windows in the default location.



Run the program from the command line using the following commands:

Scan a single host:

```
rdpscan [ip_address]
```

```
rdpscan 192.168.153.138
```

Scan a range of IP addresses:

```
rdpscan [start_ip_address]-[end_ip_address]
```

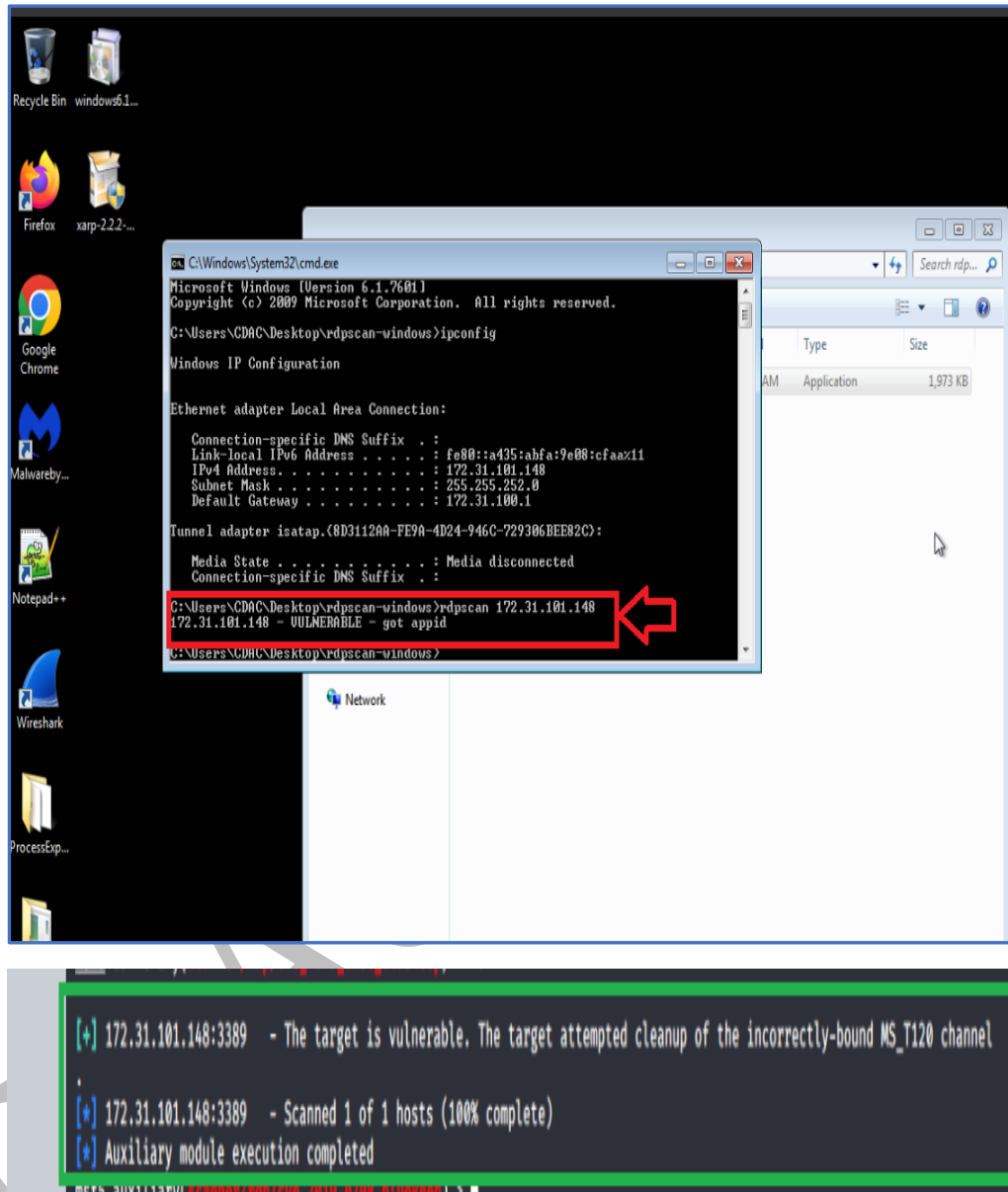
Scan a network with CIDR notation:

```
rdpscan [network]/[cidr_notation]
```

```
rdpscan 192.168.153.0/24
```

This command will scan each of the IP addresses to find out if port 3389 is open and vulnerable.

If a windows machine is vulnerable to blue keep RDP vulnerability, the rdpSCAN tool will show status as vulnerable.

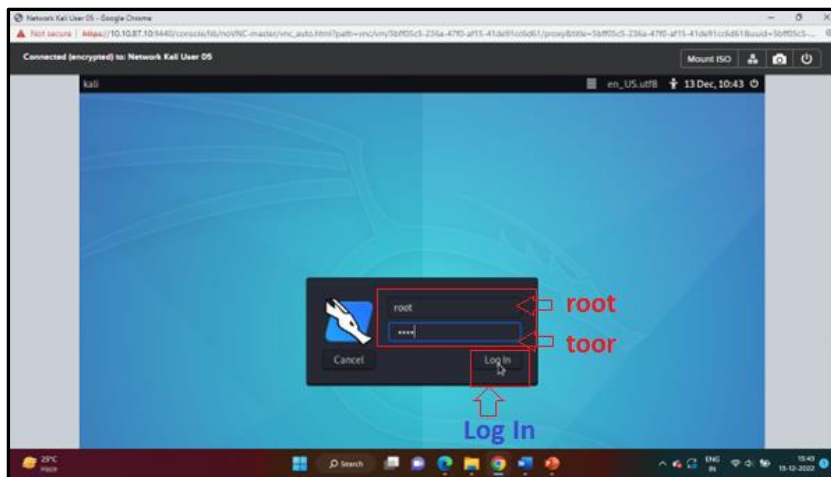


Detection of Bluekeep RDP attack (Indicators of Attack):

A. Performing Bluekeep RDP Attack on the Windows machine in your user account

To detect the IoA on your machine for a Bluekeep vulnerability-based attack, you have to first attack the machine through the following steps.

1. Connect to the kali Linux machine, created by you, using the RDP protocol. Kali Linux machine is being used as Attacker's machine.
2. When prompted for the username and password, enter root as username and toor as password. The root is the administrator user of the machine.



B. Detection of Bluekeep RDP attack

If the attack happens on your machine, the following may be the indicators of the attack:

1. Blue screen of death: the following screen will be the first visible sign of an RDP blue keep attack.

```
A problem has been detected and windows has been shut down to prevent damage
to your computer.

IRQL_NOT_LESS_OR_EQUAL

If this is the first time you've seen this Stop error screen,
restart your computer. If this screen appears again, follow
these steps:

check to make sure any new hardware or software is properly installed.
If this is a new installation, ask your hardware or software manufacturer
for any windows updates you might need.

If problems continue, disable or remove any newly installed hardware
or software. Disable BIOS memory options such as caching or shadowing.
If you need to use Safe Mode to remove or disable components, restart
your computer, press F8 to select Advanced Startup Options, and then
select Safe Mode.

Technical information:

*** STOP: 0x0000000A (0x0000000000000000,0x0000000000000002,0x0000000000000001,0
x0000000000000000)

Collecting data for crash dump ...
Initializing disk for crash dump ...
```

2. Using Event Log Viewer

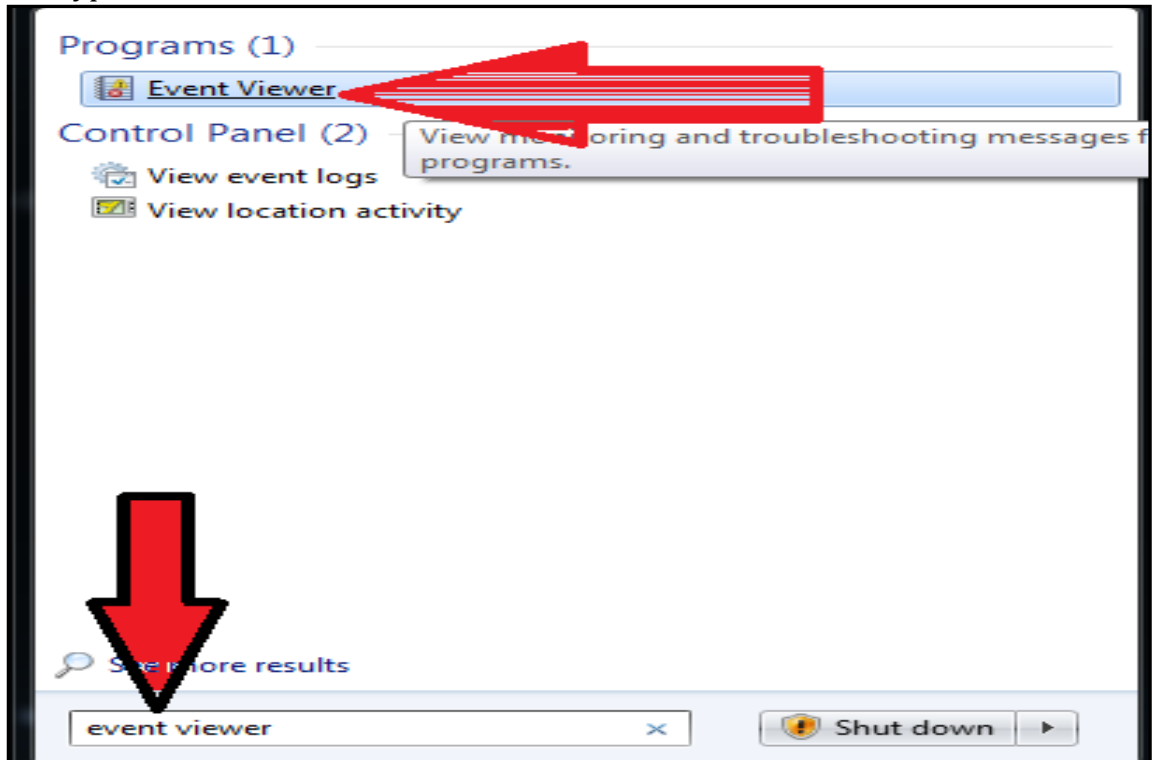
The Windows Event Viewer shows logs of applications and system messages, including errors, information messages, and warnings. It's a useful tool for troubleshooting all kinds of different Windows problems.

<https://www.howtogeek.com/123646/htg-explains-what-the-windows-event-viewer-is-and-how-you-can-use-it/>

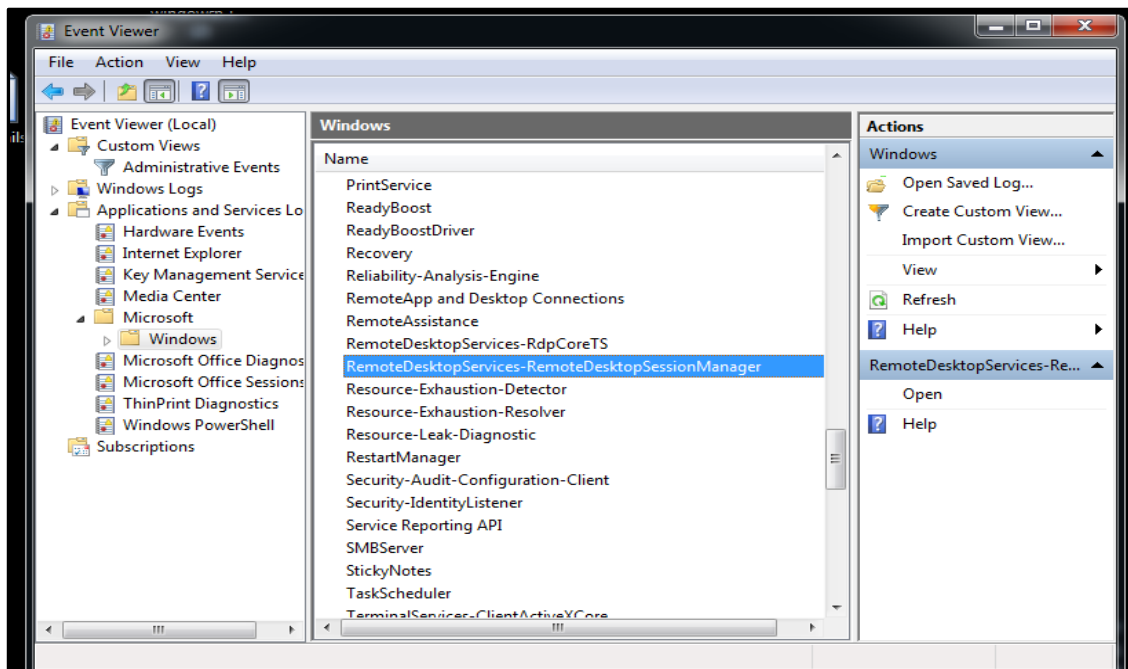
If the blue screen appears several times in the user machine, the user must check Event Viewer logs because when the attacker runs the exploit script for Bluekeep vulnerability, it will send the authentication packet, which generates the events "TerminalServices-**RemoteConnectionManager**".

The following steps must be performed to check Event Viewer Logs.

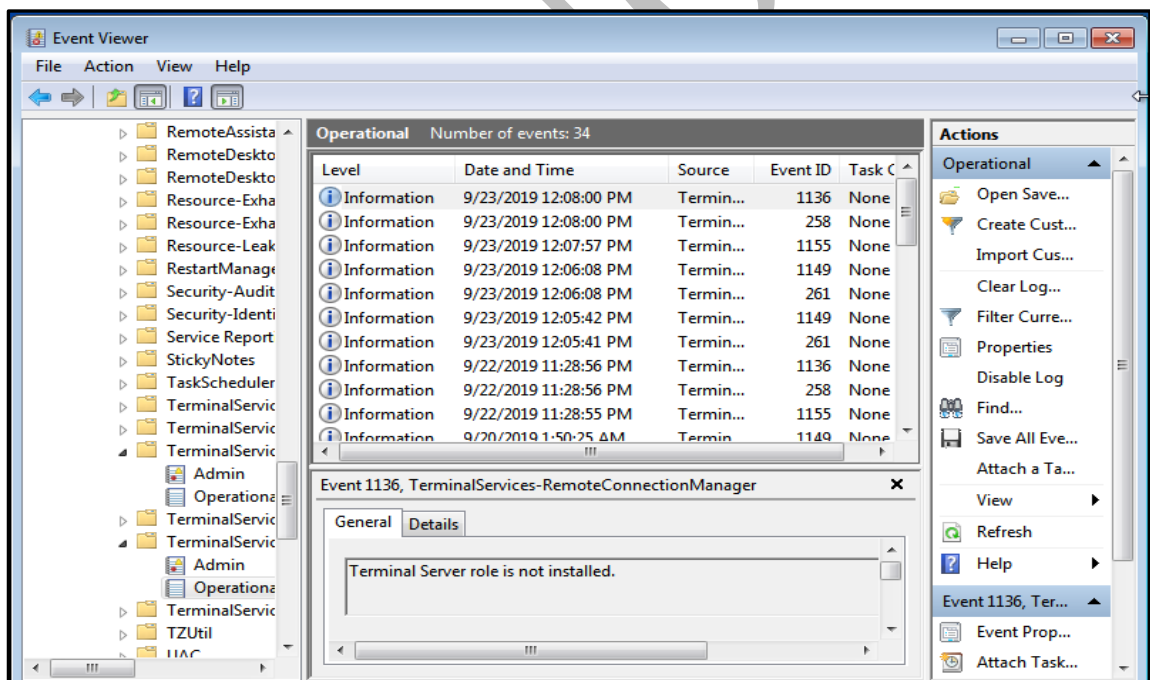
1. Type Event Viewer in the Windows search box.



2. Click on Applications and **Services**
Logs>Microsoft>Windows>RemoteDesktopServices-RemoteDesktopSessionManager



3. Click on **TerminalServices-RemoteConnectionManager**. Expand it and Click on **Operational** to find events TerminalServices -RemoteConnectionManager. The presence of these events ensures the RDP-related attack.



Prevention from the attack:

You can prevent your machines from Blue Keep vulnerability-based attacks using the following steps.

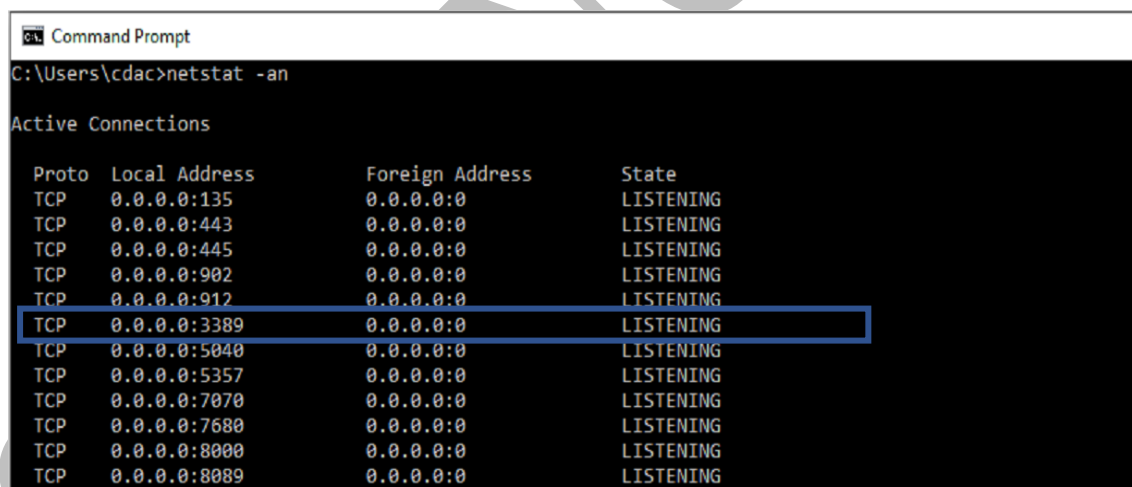
1. **Patch insecure computers.**

2. **Block vulnerable ports:** Users can also prevent the BlueKeep vulnerability by blocking port 3389 at firewalls, which is used by the RDP. This port should especially be blocked if devices and the firewall are facing the external Internet.
3. **Disable unnecessary services:** Any services that are not required, such as remote desktop services, should be blocked to prevent potential security gaps that attackers could exploit.
4. **Enable network control:** Organizations can enable Network Level Authentication (NLA), which gives them control of users that connect to their systems and prevent unauthorized access to their data and resources. This also helps them block unauthorized users looking to exploit the BlueKeep vulnerability to attack the business.
5. **Educate users:** In addition to patching systems, installing the latest software, and protecting networks, it is also important to be aware of the latest risks. Users need to ensure they understand the risks they face and can identify the signs of a potential cyberattack.

Let's understand these steps in detail.

Step1: If RDP service is not required on the system, disable it as a security best practice

Check the open ports on your windows machine. if port no 3389 is found open, disable it. This port is used for running RDP (Remote desktop service). you can check it using the netstat command (run on command prompt), as follows.



```
Command Prompt
C:\Users\cdac>netstat -an

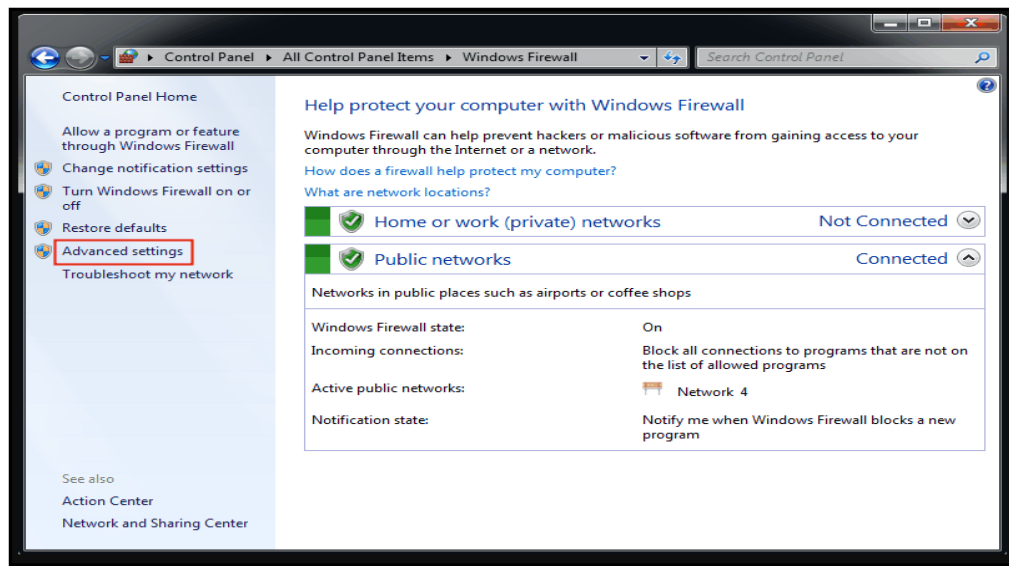
Active Connections

Proto Local Address           Foreign Address         State
TCP   0.0.0.0:135              0.0.0.0:0               LISTENING
TCP   0.0.0.0:443              0.0.0.0:0               LISTENING
TCP   0.0.0.0:445              0.0.0.0:0               LISTENING
TCP   0.0.0.0:902              0.0.0.0:0               LISTENING
TCP   0.0.0.0:912              0.0.0.0:0               LISTENING
TCP   0.0.0.0:3389             0.0.0.0:0               LISTENING
TCP   0.0.0.0:5040             0.0.0.0:0               LISTENING
TCP   0.0.0.0:5357             0.0.0.0:0               LISTENING
TCP   0.0.0.0:7070             0.0.0.0:0               LISTENING
TCP   0.0.0.0:7680             0.0.0.0:0               LISTENING
TCP   0.0.0.0:8000             0.0.0.0:0               LISTENING
TCP   0.0.0.0:8089             0.0.0.0:0               LISTENING
```

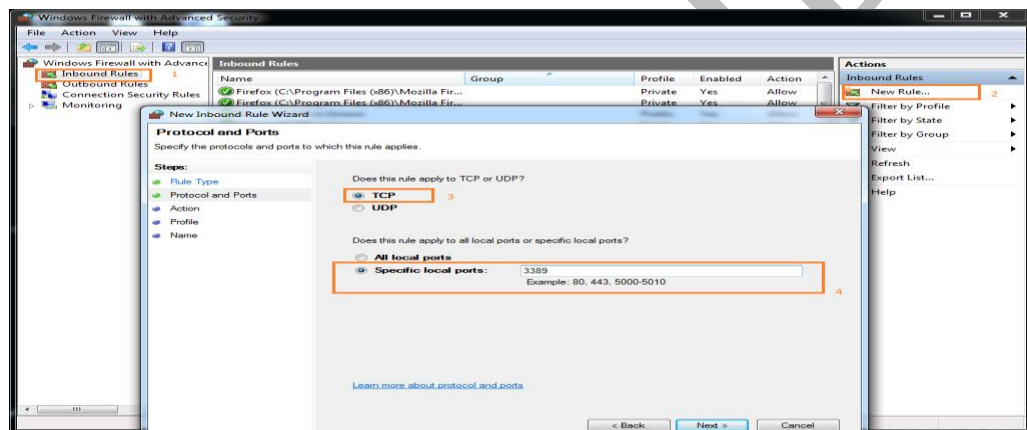
Disabling unused and unneeded services helps reduce exposure to security vulnerabilities.

Blocking port, No 3389 in Windows Firewall:

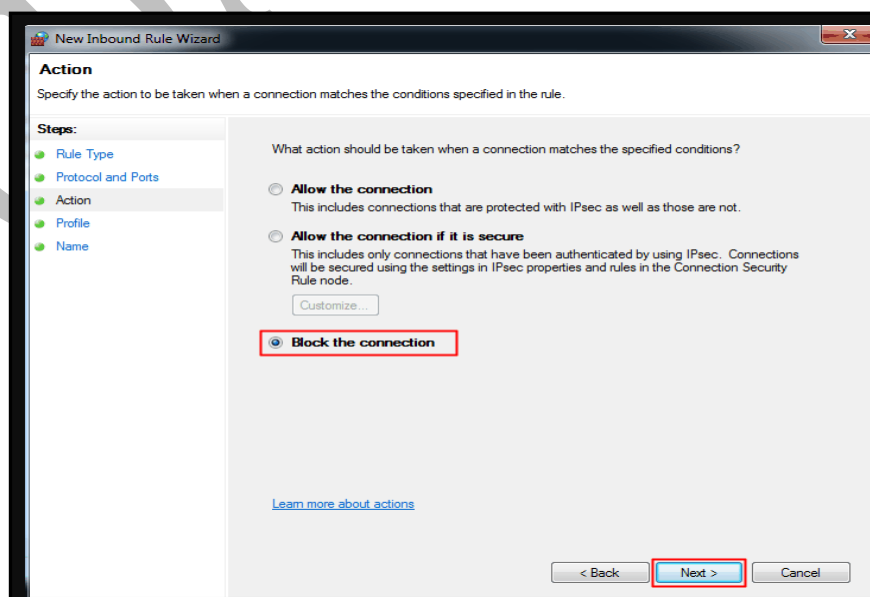
- a. Go to Start > Control Panel > Windows Firewall and find Advanced settings on the left side.

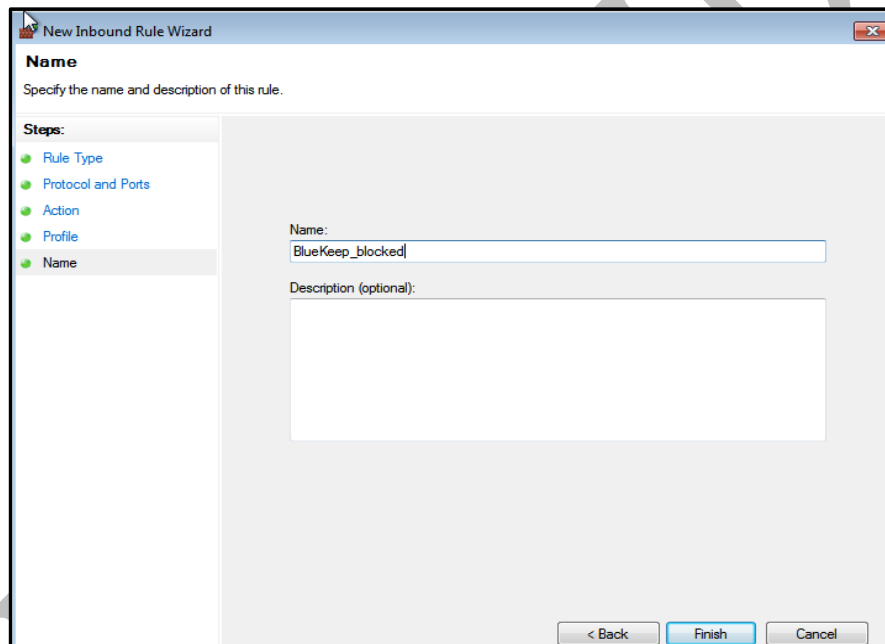
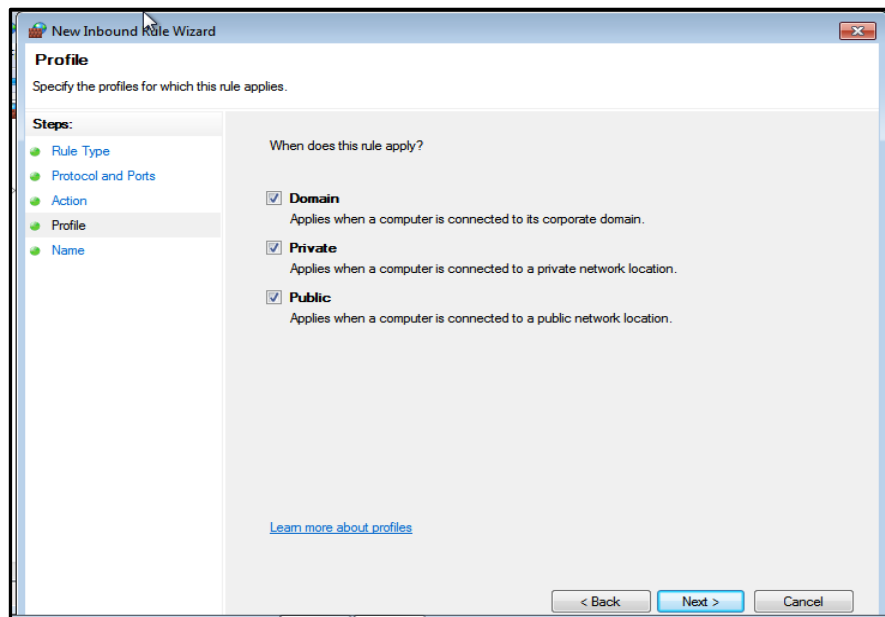


- b. Click on Inbound Rules > New rule. Then in the pop-up window, choose Port > Next > TCP > Specific local ports and type 3389 and go to Next

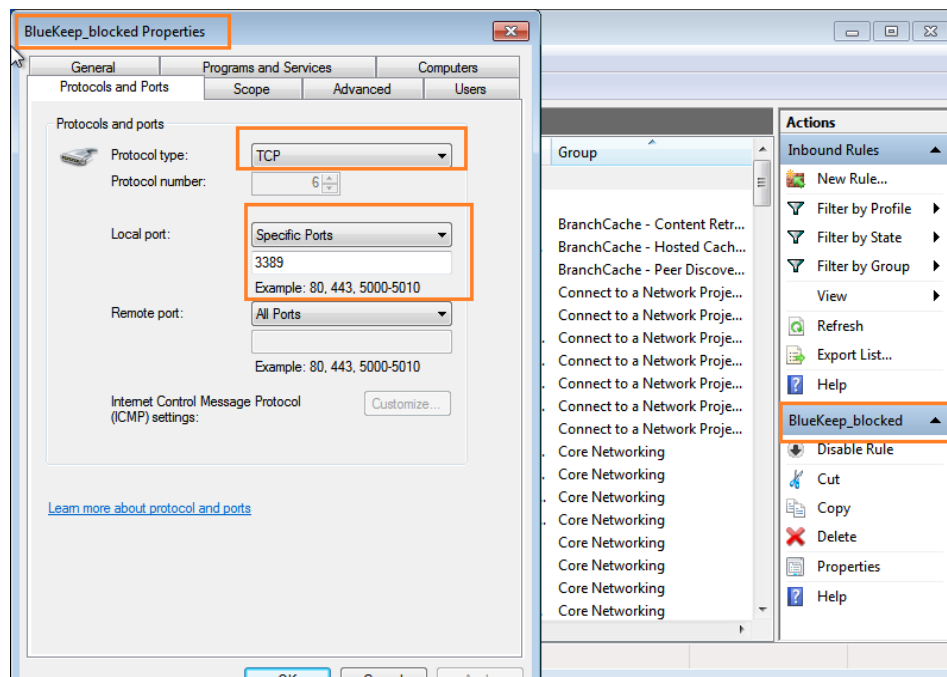


- c. Choose Block the connection > Next. Tick the three checkboxes and click Next. Specify the name and description and click Finish.





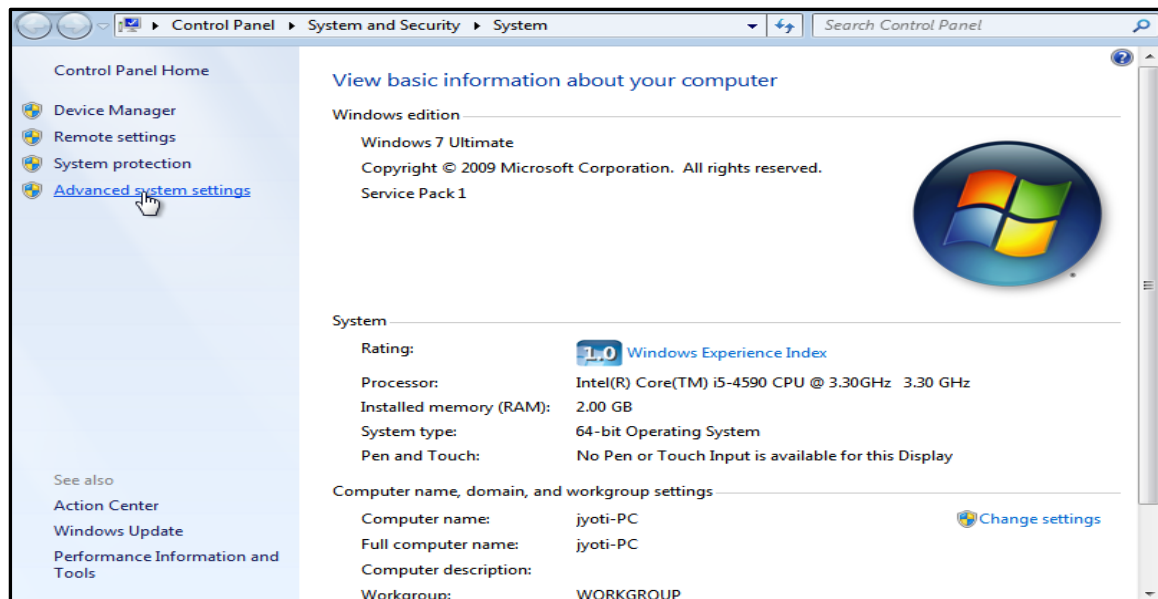
d. Check if rule is created by Properties > Protocols and Ports > Local Port.



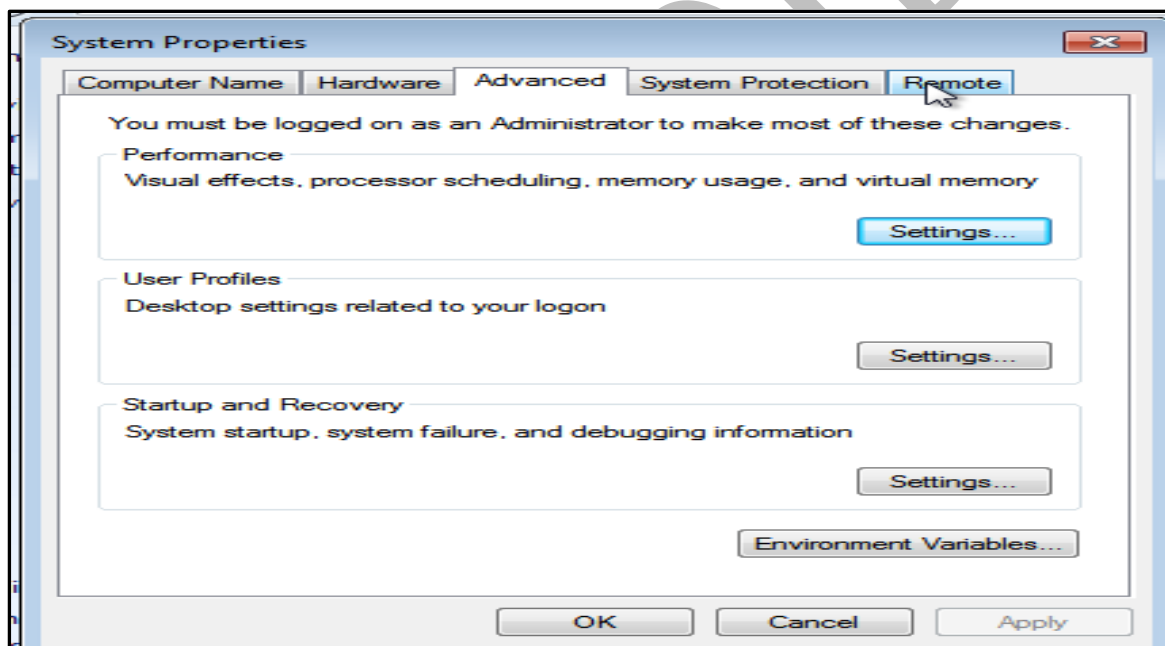
Note: RDP service (Port no 3389) must be disabled, only if you do not need it. If you close port 3389, you will not be able to get access to a remote desktop, either on the same network or another network. The best solution for this problem is enabling Network Level Authentication and installing security updates for RDP as mentioned below.

Step2: Next step to prevent the Blue keep RDP attack is to configure Network Level Authentication on the machine which offers extra authentication measure and enhance security so the attacker doesn't log in easily. To enable Network Level Authentication, perform the following steps.

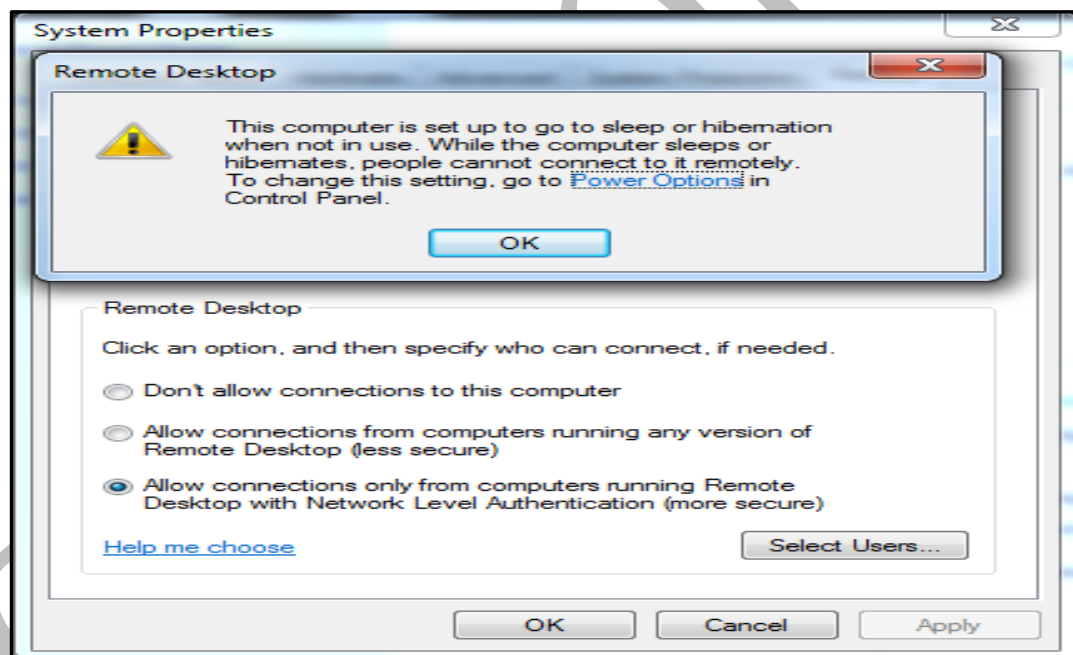
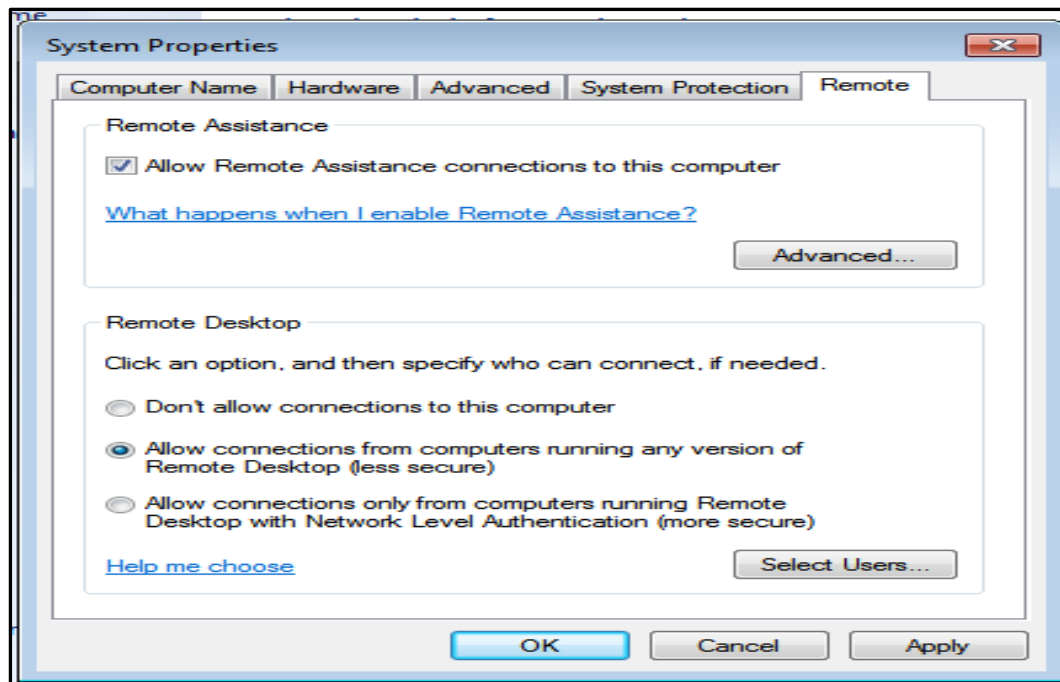
- a. Go to properties>Advanced system setting



- b. On the Remote tab in the System Properties dialog box on an RD Session Host server.

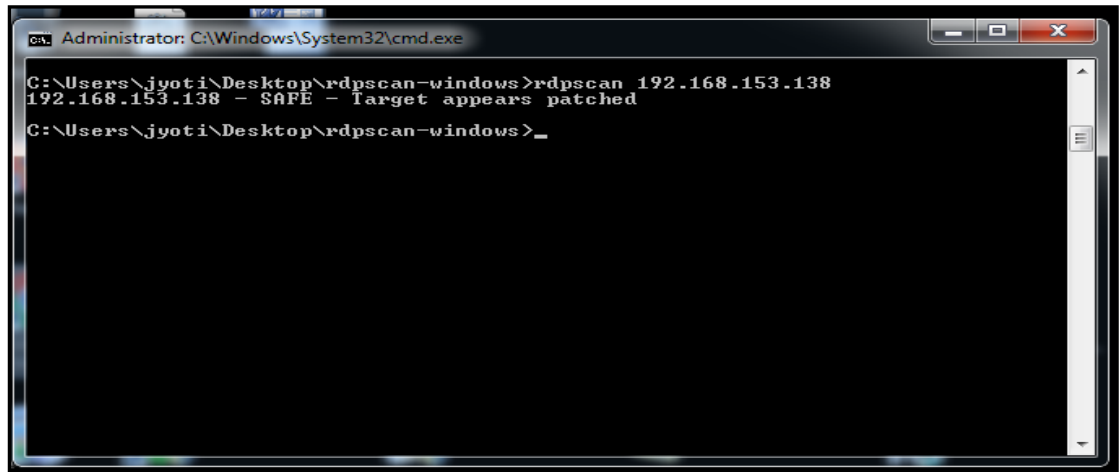


- Choose the option **Allow the connection only from computers running Remote Desktop with Network Level Authentication (more secure).**



After scanning for the vulnerability, the output may be Safe, **Vulnerable**, or **Unknown**.

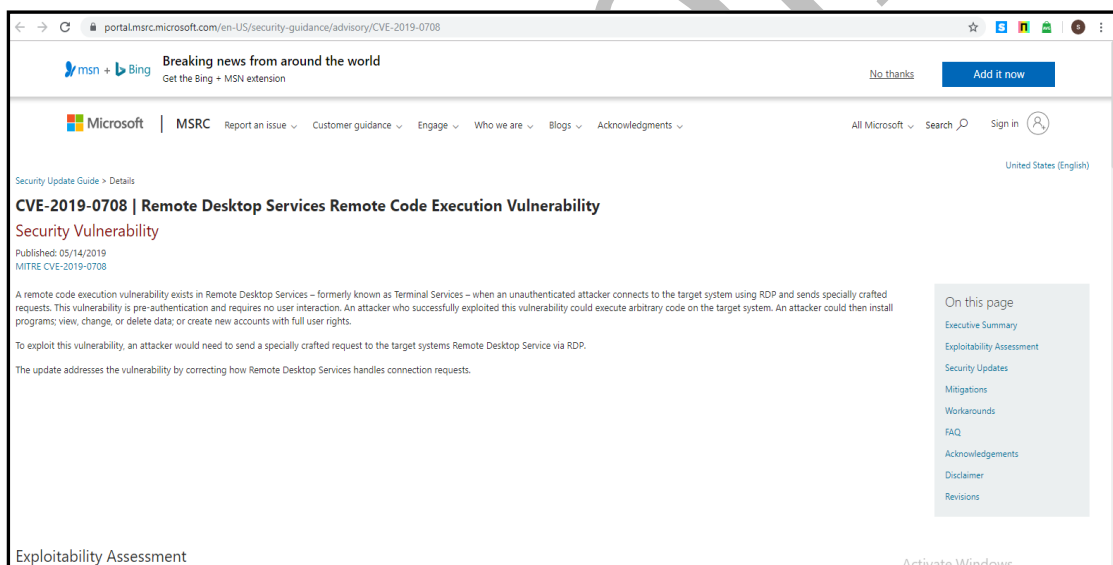
Here in this case, it reflects the status as **safe**.



```
Administrator: C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe
C:\Users\jyoti\Desktop\rdpscan-windows>rdpscan 192.168.153.138
192.168.153.138 - SAFE - Target appears patched
C:\Users\jyoti\Desktop\rdpscan-windows>_
```

Step 3: CVE-2019-0708 | Remote Desktop Services Remote Code Execution Vulnerability security update

- a. Go to <https://portal.msrc.microsoft.com/en-US/security-guidance/advisory/CVE-2019-0708> where the links are available for the security update packages.



- b. Scroll down to the operating system that is in use. In this example, it was Windows 7 64bits.

portal.msrc.microsoft.com/en-US/security-guidance/advisory/CVE-2019-0708

Revisions

Exploitability Assessment

The following table provides an [exploitability assessment](#) for this vulnerability at the time of original publication.

Publicly Disclosed	Exploited	Latest Software Release	Older Software Release	Denial of Service
No	No	4 - Not affected	1 - Exploitation More Likely	Not Applicable

Security Updates CVSS Score

Security Updates

To determine the support life cycle for your software version or edition, see the [Microsoft Support Lifecycle](#).

Product	Platform	Article	Download	Impact	Severity	Supersedece
Windows 7 for 32-bit Systems Service Pack 1		4499164	Monthly Rollup	Remote Code Execution	Critical	4493472
		4499175	Security Only			
Windows 7 for x64-based Systems Service Pack 1		4499164	Monthly Rollup	Remote Code Execution	Critical	4493472
		4499175	Security Only			
Windows Server 2008 for 32-bit Systems Service Pack 2		4499149	Monthly Rollup	Remote Code Execution	Critical	4493471
		4499180	Security Only			

- c. Click on the desired package. In this example, the package used is Windows 7 for x64-based Systems Service Pack 1 (KB4499164) Monthly Rollup. Make sure it's the Monthly Rollup link that is chosen!

catalog.update.microsoft.com/Search.aspx?q=KB4499164

Microsoft Update Catalog

FAQ | Help

Search results for "KB4499164"

Updates: 1 - 6 of 6 (page 1 of 1)

Title	Products	Classification	Last Updated	Version	Size	Download
2019-05 Security Monthly Quality Rollup for Windows 7 for x86-based Systems (KB4499164)	Windows 7	Security Updates	5/11/2019	n/a	174.4 MB	Download
2019-05 Security Monthly Quality Rollup for Windows Embedded Standard 7 for x86-based Systems (KB4499164)	Windows Embedded Standard 7	Security Updates	5/11/2019	n/a	174.4 MB	Download
2019-05 Security Monthly Quality Rollup for Windows Server 2008 R2 for x64-based Systems (KB4499164)	Windows Server 2008 R2	Security Updates	5/11/2019	n/a	269.8 MB	Download
2019-05 Security Monthly Quality Rollup for Windows Embedded Standard 7 for x64-based Systems (KB4499164)	Windows Embedded Standard 7	Security Updates	5/11/2019	n/a	269.8 MB	Download
2019-05 Security Monthly Quality Rollup for Windows 7 for x64-based Systems (KB4499164)	Windows 7	Security Updates	5/11/2019	n/a	269.8 MB	Download
2019-05 Security Monthly Quality Rollup for Windows Server 2008 R2 for Itanium-based Systems (KB4499164)	Windows Server 2008 R2	Security Updates	5/11/2019	n/a	159.7 MB	Download

- d. A new window will open. Select the update for the windows version that window 7 have and press Download.

Microsoft Update Catalog - Google Chrome

https://www.catalog.update.microsoft.com/ScopedViewOnline.aspx?updateid=4ee6f09d-38d9-47ef-8ba9-dd8...

Update Details

March, 2017 Security Only Quality Update for Windows 7 for x64-based Systems (KB4012212)

Last Modified: 3/28/2017

Size: 33.2 MB

Details:

Overview | Language Selection | Package Details | Install Resources

Description: A security issue has been identified in a Microsoft software product that could affect your system. You can help protect your system by installing this update from Microsoft. For a complete listing of the issues that are included in this update, see the associated Microsoft Knowledge Base article. After you install this update, you may have to restart your system.

Architecture: AMD64

Classification: Security Updates

Supported products: Windows 7

Supported languages: all

MSRC Number: MS17-008

MSRC severity: Critical

KB article number: 4012212

More information: <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/4012212>

Support URL: <http://support.microsoft.com>

Close

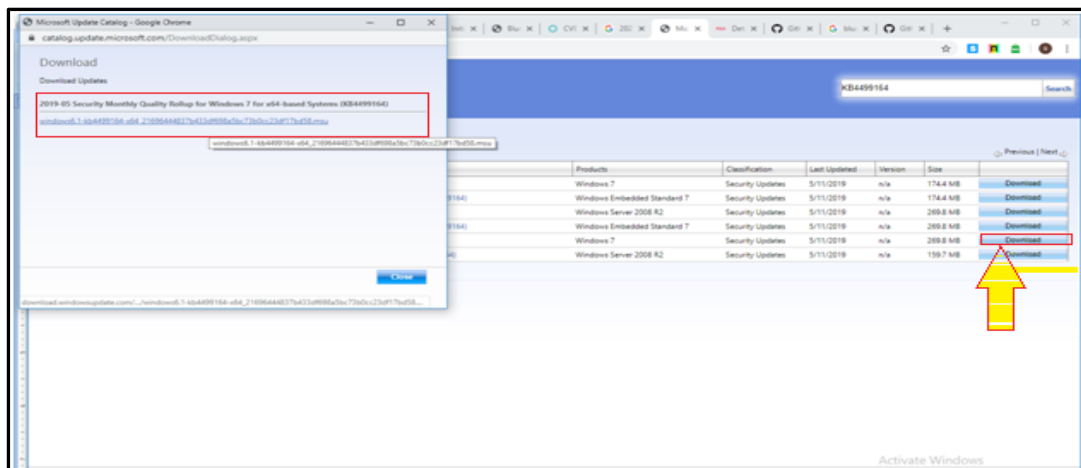
Microsoft Update Catalog

KB4012212

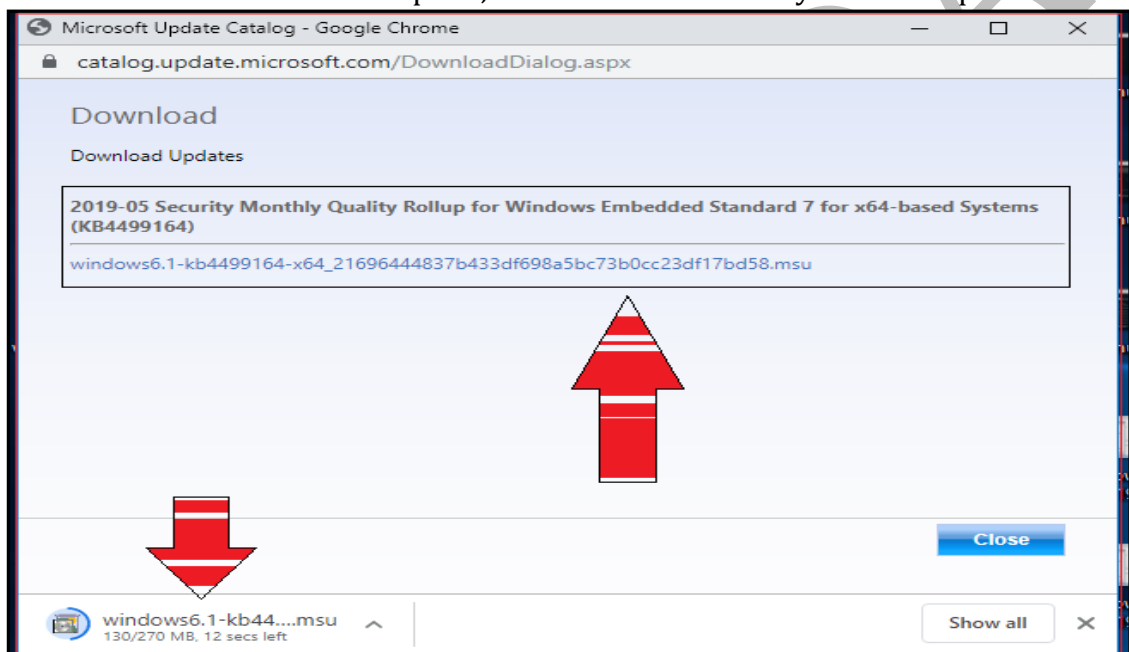
Search

Products	Classification	Last Updated	Version	Size	Download
Windows 7	Security Updates	3/28/2017	n/a	33.2 MB	Download
Windows 7	Security Updates	3/28/2017	n/a	18.0 MB	Download
Windows Embedded Standard 7	Security Updates	3/28/2017	n/a	18.0 MB	Download
Windows Embedded Standard 7	Security Updates	3/28/2017	n/a	33.2 MB	Download
Windows Server 2008 R2	Security Updates	3/28/2017	n/a	33.2 MB	Download
Windows Server 2008 R2	Security Updates	3/28/2017	n/a	34.5 MB	Download

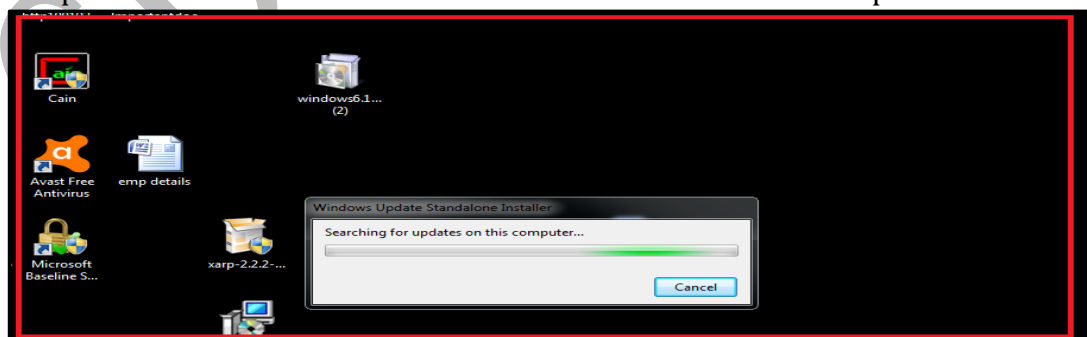
- e. Click on the link that will appear after pressing the Download button:

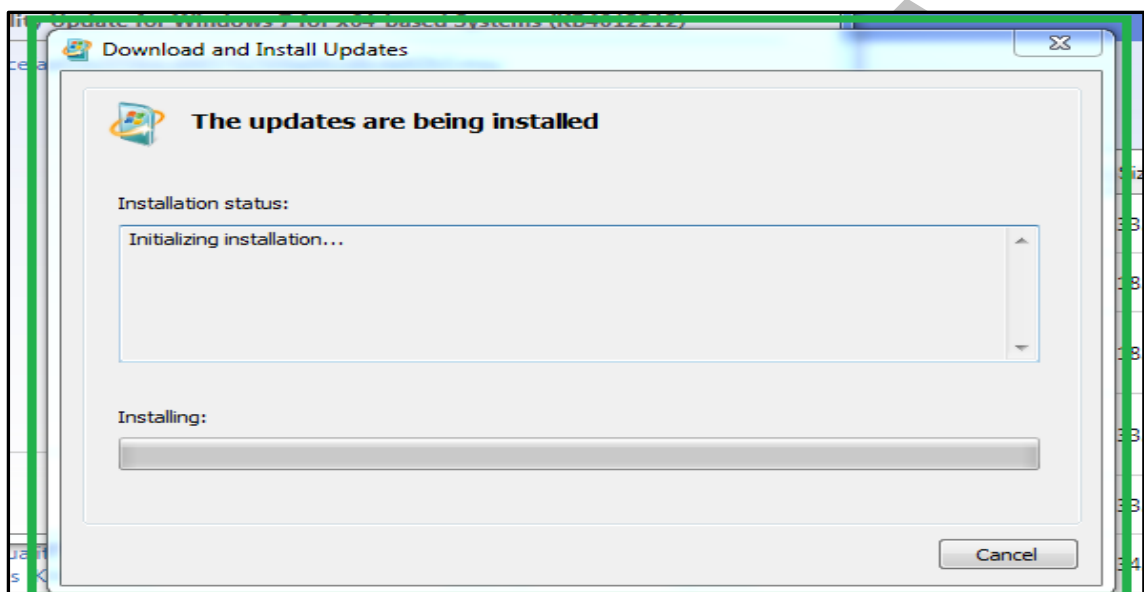
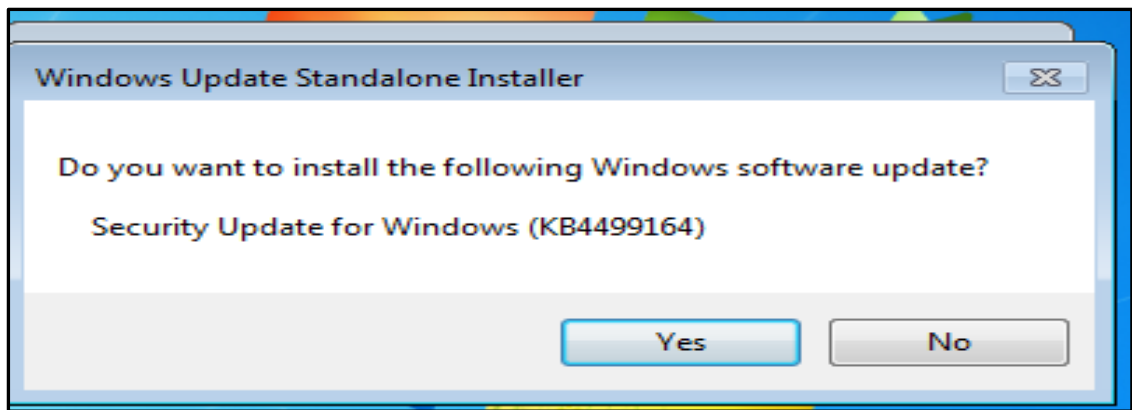


f. After the download is complete, run it as would run any other setup.

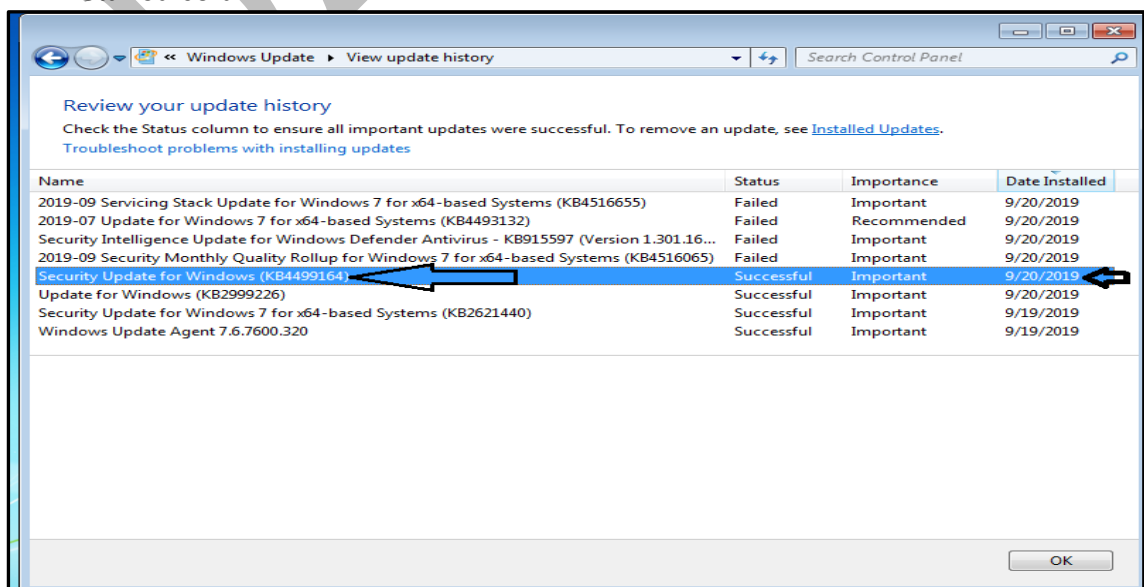


g. Windows appears "Do you want to install the following Windows software update". Press Yes and this will initialize the installation setup:



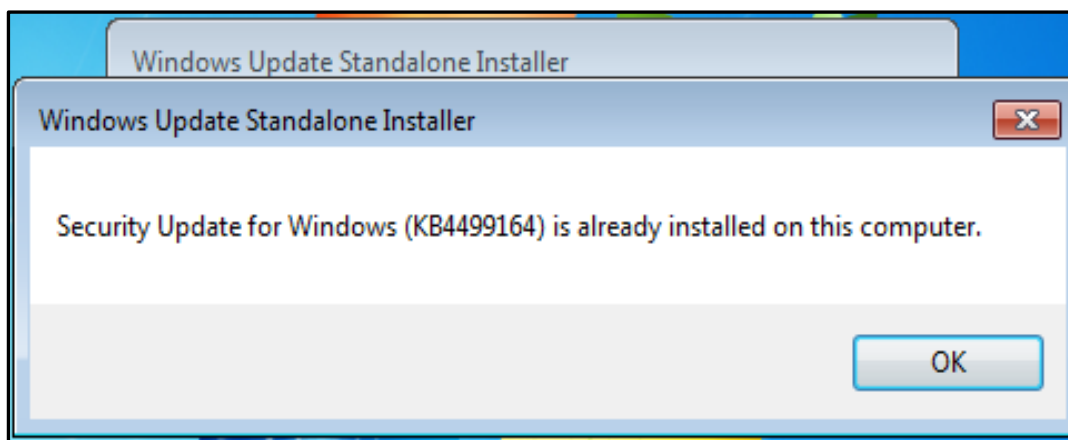


- h. At the end of the installation, it will ask to restart the computer, so restart it.
- i. After rebooting, to check if the installation was successful, just go to Control Panel > Windows Updates > View update History (on the left side) and see if the Security Update for Windows is installed. It should have the current date in the Date Installed column.



IMPORTANT!

If the update has been already applied or installed, then windows appear on the screen informing about it.



Note: To check the hardening of your machine for Blue Keep-based attacks, again perform the attack on your machine and check for the Indicators of the Attack. if an attack happens, re-read the manual again and take the steps for hardening the machine against this attack.