

MWR InfoSecurity Security
Advisory

ITN News Gadget - Script
Injection Vulnerability

4th February 2008



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ITN News Gadget Vulnerability

Package Name:	ITN News Windows® Vista™ Gadget
Date:	23 rd October 2007
Affected Versions:	Confirmed in Version 1.06

CVE Reference	Not Yet Assigned
Author	R Dominguez Vega
Severity	High Risk
Local/Remote	Remote
Vulnerability Class	Script Injection / Remote Code Execution
Development Company	Fernhart New Media
Vendor	ITN News
Vendor Response	A fix has been implemented for version 1.23 ITN News Gadget upgrade can be found in the following location http://itn.co.uk/vista/itn-hub-gadget/index.html
Exploit Details Included	Yes
Application Language	HTML, JavaScript, and XML

Overview:

The Windows Vista operating system includes the “Windows Sidebar”. This new feature allows users to display ‘gadgets’ on the Sidebar and on the Windows desktop. Gadgets are small applications which can be very flexible in design and function. They are managed by the Windows Sidebar and can be used for many purposes. The range of their functionality and sophistication is dependent upon the developer’s creativity and skill. Windows Vista includes various gadgets by default, such as a calendar, calculator, currency converter, etc.

Impact:

The ITN News gadget has been identified as being vulnerable to a script injection attack that could allow remote attackers to execute commands on the target system. An attacker successfully exploiting this vulnerability could execute arbitrary commands in the context of the current logged in user.

The ITN News Sidebar gadget vulnerability is present because of a lack of sufficient sanitisation on arguments passed from the web server to the Sidebar gadget application.

Cause:

Exploitation of this vulnerability is possible because the ITN News Sidebar gadget does not properly sanitise parameters that are passed to it. If a script is passed to the Sidebar gadget from an attacker capable of intercepting traffic between the gadget and the web server, the script is injected into the gadget and therefore is executed.

Interim Workaround:

Remove the gadget from the sidebar until a fix is provided. Communications between the server and the gadget should be correctly protected by use of SSL; when correctly implemented this will minimise the risk of an attacker manipulating the traffic.

Solution:

The vendor has addressed this vulnerability and implemented a fix in version 1.23. This version has yet to be tested.

ITN News Gadget upgrade can be found in the following location:-
<http://itn.co.uk/vista/itn-hub-gadget/index.html>

1 Detailed Vulnerability Description

1.1 Introduction

The ITN News Sidebar gadget provides users with the ability to view the latest world, money, sports, showbiz and weather news. Allowing users to read and watch videos news on the flyout panel.

The screen shot below shows the ITN News gadget running on the Sidebar and displaying the news on the flyout panel: -



1.2 Technical Background

Windows Vista includes the "Windows Sidebar". This new feature allows users to display 'gadgets' on the sidebar and on the Windows desktop. Gadgets are small applications which can be very flexible in design and function. They are managed by the Windows Sidebar and can be created by any Windows Vista user with moderate programming skills.

Gadgets can include HTML pages, XML files, CSS, JavaScript or VB code. This flexibility, when taken with the ability to use ActiveX and the gadgets' APIs, makes the development of new gadgets very attractive for both Windows Vista users and potential attackers.

1.3 Overview of Vulnerability

The ITN News gadget requests information from a web server, which responds to the gadget with the latest news stories. An attacker capable of intercepting the web server response to the gadget request could modify that response such that a script was injected and then run on the user's system. The injected script would run under the privileges of the currently logged in user.

A screenshot of a JavaScript alert box being rendered after the web server response had been modified is included here: -



1.4 Exploit Information

It was possible to construct a proof of concept arbitrary remote code execution attack. This could be used as the basis of an attack which gained access to a user's machine at the privilege level at which they were logged on.

It is acknowledged that the code given below is trivial, but it should be noted that MWR InfoSecurity are mindful of their obligation to protect their customers and Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) whilst also enabling the security community to accurately assess the vulnerability of systems running affected software.

As a proof of concept, one simple example of executing commands via this attack is outlined below.

An attacker capable of intercepting the traffic between the ITN News gadget and the remote web server which provides the gadget with information, could inject the following script in a "short_title" section of the response returned by the web server: -

```
<![CDATA[<script SRC='vbscript:System.Shell.execute("cmd.exe", "/k ipconfig")'>]]>
```

In this case this would result in the "ipconfig" command being executed on the user's system. However, an attacker could alter this code to execute commands of their choosing which, depending on the logged on user's privileges, could result in the remote compromise of the target system.

1.5 Dependencies

For this attack to be exploited an attacker would need to be able to intercept and modify network traffic between the remote web server supplying the information and the targeted user.

2 Recommendations

The following security measures are recommended to enhance the security of gadgets by validating the data received and securing the channel over which the data is transmitted.

- Transmission channel encryption - it is recommended that gadgets should use secure protocols (such as SSL) when receiving any data, even if that data is from a source which is perceived as trusted. This will prevent an attacker who is able to intercept the data from reading or manipulating this data. This technique does, of course, rely on a gadget correctly checking certificates presented.
- Source information validation - it is also recommended that the source from which the gadget obtains information is validated such that only data from specific sources can be processed and any data received from an unknown source is rejected.
- Input validation - it is recommended that the gadget be designed to correctly validate the data received from the server. This should include a white-listing function that only accepts the types of data required by the gadget.
- Server side issues - it is also recommended that the responses returned by a server, should only provide that information which is specifically required by the gadget, rather than returning complete HTML web pages. This would limit an attacker's chances of injecting scripts into the server response.

The article "Inspect Your Gadget", written by Michael Howard and David Ross is recommended reading and includes examples of secure gadget development. This article can be found at:-

<http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/bb498012.aspx>

The whitepaper "Considerations for the Secure Rollout of Sidebar Gadgets in Windows Vista", written by Rafael Dominguez Vega is also a recommended reading. This whitepaper can be found at:-

http://www.mwrinfosecurity.com/publications/mwri_sidebar-gadgets_2007-09-25.pdf

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