"Meltdown" and "Spectre" Bulletin

1/5/2018

What is Happening?

Meltdown and Spectre are both exploits in processing chips of the past 20+ years that allow programs to steal data (e.g., passwords stored in a password manager or browser, your personal photos, emails, instant messages and even business-critical documents) which is currently processed on the computer.

Meltdown and Spectre affects all Desktops, Laptops and Servers (e.g., Windows, Mac, or Linux), including phones and mobile devices, and in the cloud computer services.

For more detail information feel free to visit: https://meltdownattack.com/

Action Needed:

Apply updates as they become available. There are currently three categories:

1) **Browsers** (Firefox, Chrome, IE, Edge, Safari, etc.) – easy to do by individuals at home and work; **Information Technology (IT) will handle updates for University owned and managed computers**.

2) **Operating Systems** (Windows 10, Windows 7, Linux varieties, MacOS, iOS, Android, etc.) – easy to do by individuals at home but note that some antivirus products may block patching (see link below); **Information Technology (IT) will handle updates for University owned and managed computers**.

3) **Bios**/firmware – tools exist to facilitate, **do NOT try at work** unless working with IT staff. Home users should consult an IT professional and backup any important files prior to applying any bios updates.

Individuals should look for browser updates and apply at the earliest opportunity.

IT is developing a scheduled push of updates for UTRGV computers, including desktops, laptops, and servers, and will update that information through the service blog and department contacts. OS and Bios updates are disruptive and require reboots, so please be prepared.

Additional Information:

- Antivirus is blocking Microsoft patch? : http://www.zdnet.com/article/windows-meltdown-spectre-fix-how-to-check-if-your-av-is-blocking-microsoft-patch/
- Meltdown and Spectre FAQ: Fix for Intel CPU flaws could slow down PCs and Macs: https://www.pcworld.com/article/3245606/security/intel-x86-cpu-kernel-bug-faq-how-it-affects-pc-mac.html
- US-CERT notice: https://www.us-cert.gov/ncas/alerts/TA18-004A

Information Security Office

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Action Needed:

Backup important files (documents, photos, etc.) and apply updates as they become available. There are currently three categories:

1) **Browsers** (Firefox, Chrome, IE, Edge, Safari, etc.)

2) **Operating Systems** (Windows 10, Windows 7, Linux varieties, MacOS, iOS, Android, etc.) – note that some antivirus products may block patching (see link below);

3) **Bios**/firmware – Users should consult an IT professional and backup any important files prior to applying any bios updates. *Please note that UTRGV IT Staff is not permitted to work on any computers that are not owned by UTRGV.*

Individuals should look for browser updates and apply at the earliest opportunity.

Additional Information:

- Antivirus is blocking Microsoft patch? : http://www.zdnet.com/article/windows-meltdown-spectre-fix-how-to-check-if-your-av-is-blocking-microsoft-patch/
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