

Oracle Linux 8

Enhancing System Security



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Preface

[Oracle Linux 8: Enhancing System Security](#) describes features in Oracle Linux 8 that can enhance the security of systems. The guide also includes guidelines and recommendations for best security practices when working with Oracle Linux.

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Conventions

The following text conventions are used in this document:

Convention	Meaning
boldface	Boldface type indicates graphical user interface elements associated with an action, or terms defined in text or the glossary.
<i>italic</i>	Italic type indicates book titles, emphasis, or placeholder variables for which you supply particular values.
<code>monospace</code>	Monospace type indicates commands within a paragraph, URLs, code in examples, text that appears on the screen, or text that you enter.

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Diversity and Inclusion

Oracle is fully committed to diversity and inclusion. Oracle respects and values having a diverse workforce that increases thought leadership and innovation. As part of our initiative to build a more inclusive culture that positively impacts our employees, customers, and partners, we are working to remove insensitive terms from our products and documentation. We are also

mindful of the necessity to maintain compatibility with our customers' existing technologies and the need to ensure continuity of service as Oracle's offerings and industry standards evolve. Because of these technical constraints, our effort to remove insensitive terms is ongoing and will take time and external cooperation.

1

Overview of Security Principles

This section provides a brief overview of system security and includes some principles for how to enhance security on Oracle Linux systems.

Oracle Linux is a secure enterprise-class OS that can provide the performance, data integrity, and the application uptime necessary for business-critical production environments.

Thousands of production systems at Oracle run Oracle Linux, and many internal developers use it as their development platform. Oracle Linux is at the heart of Oracle Cloud Infrastructure and several Oracle engineered systems, including the Oracle Exadata Database Machine, Oracle Private Cloud Appliance, and Oracle Database Appliance. Oracle Linux is also used across Oracle cloud, whether it's infrastructure, database services, or other Software-as-a-Service (SaaS).

Backed by Oracle Support, these mission-critical systems, and deployments depend fundamentally on the built-in security and reliability features of Oracle Linux.

Oracle has been a regular participant in the Linux community, contributing code enhancements for the mainline Linux kernel. Oracle also contributes to many open source initiatives, such as Oracle Cluster File System and the Btrfs file system. From a security perspective, having roots within open source is a significant advantage.

The Linux community, which includes many experienced developers and security experts, reviews posted Linux code extensively before it's tested and released. The open source Linux community has supplied many security improvements over time, including access control lists (ACLs), cryptographic libraries, and trusted utilities. Oracle builds on such tools to provide a solid and secure OS.

Oracle recommends that you follow some fundamental security principles when using Oracle Linux. These principles are guidelines that administrators can use to build security policies.

Minimize and Secure the Software Footprint

Planning an Oracle Linux system's purpose, deployment configuration, and software requirements in advance is essential to minimizing attack vectors. During the design phase of a deployment you can uninstall or disable any components and services that aren't needed or used in a particular configuration or deployment scenario, including any peripheral functionality or components. Because deployment requirements can vary over time, you also need processes in place to uninstall and disable any features that aren't needed or used in specific configuration or deployment scenarios. You might also consider using the minimal install base environment that only installs the essential components of the OS by default. If you're using a kickstart configuration file to install Oracle Linux, the minimal install includes the `@base` and `@core` packages.

For more information about these installation options, see [Oracle Linux 8: Installing Oracle Linux](#).

Find more information about the various base environments available by running the `dnf group list -v` command. This command displays the same list of base environments available on the Software Selection screen of the Oracle Linux GUI installer. For example:

```
dnf group list -v
```

```
Last metadata expiration check: 0:55:03 ago on Tue 18 Jul 2023 12:19:06 PM GMT.
Available Environment Groups:
  Server with GUI (graphical-server-environment)
  Server (server-product-environment)
  Minimal Install (minimal-environment)
...
Installed Environment Groups:
  Server with GUI (graphical-server-environment)
Installed Groups:
  Container Management (container-management)
...
Available Groups:
  Legacy UNIX Compatibility (legacy-unix)
...
```

To review what the `minimal-environment` group includes, run the `dnf group info` command. For example:

```
dnf group info minimal-environment
```

```
Last metadata expiration check: 0:04:29 ago on Tue 18 Jul 2023 12:55:49 PM GMT.
Environment Group: Minimal Install
Description: Basic functionality.
Mandatory Groups:
  Core
Optional Groups:
  Guest Agents
  Standard
```

Use the same command to find out what packages are included in the `core` group. For example:

```
dnf info core
```

```
Last metadata expiration check: 0:04:46 ago on Tue 18 Jul 2023 12:55:49 PM GMT.

Group: Core
Description: Smallest possible installation
Mandatory Packages:
  NetworkManager
  audit
  basesystem
```

```
bash
...
Default Packages:
  NetworkManager-team
  NetworkManager-tui
...
Optional Packages:
  dracut-config-generic
...
```

To review more information about the individual packages, run the `dnf info` command on the packages. For example:

```
dnf info bash
```

```
Last metadata expiration check: 0:10:14 ago on Tue 18 Jul 2023 12:55:49 PM GMT.
Installed Packages
Name           : bash
Version        : 4.4.20
Release        : 4.el8_6
Architecture   : x86_64
Size           : 6.5 M
Source         : bash-4.4.20-4.el8_6.src.rpm
Repository     : @System
From repo      : ol8_baseos_latest
Summary        : The GNU Bourne Again shell
URL            : https://www.gnu.org/software/bash
License        : GPLv3+
Description    : The GNU Bourne Again shell (Bash) is a shell or command
language
                : interpreter that is compatible with the Bourne shell (sh). Bash
                : incorporates useful features from the Korn shell (ksh) and the
C shell
                : (csh). Most sh scripts can be run by bash without modification.
```

Another important way to ensure that Oracle Linux systems are secure is to only install those software packages that are essential for performing necessary functions. Extra functions and components can increase the security risk, so they can be removed or uninstalled as needed.

Installing software from secure, known, and trusted sources is considered good security practice. Oracle signs packages with GPG keys so that administrators can confirm the provenance and authenticity of software packages. Oracle also uses TLS to secure the networking actions of the software installation and update tools provided with Oracle Linux.

Keep Software Up-to-date

One of the principles of good security practice is to keep all software versions and patches up-to-date. Oracle maintains software and releases errata and patch updates using the Oracle Linux yum server and the Unbreakable Linux Network (ULN).

Updating the installed software on Oracle Linux to patch any vulnerabilities and minimize the attack surface as often as possible is considered good security practice. For more information, see [Understanding the Importance of Updates](#).

Also consider using Oracle Ksplice in addition to regular system updates to automatically patch the running kernel and common userspace libraries such as openssl and glibc without any required system downtime. For more information about Ksplice, see [Oracle Linux: Ksplice User's Guide](#).

Restrict Network Access to Critical Services

Keeping both middle-tier applications and databases behind a firewall restricts access to those systems to a known network route that you can monitor and restrict, or you can use a firewall router as a substitute for several independent firewalls.

If you can't use firewalls, you can access based on IP address. Restricting database access by IP address often causes application client/server programs to fail for DHCP clients. To resolve that problem, consider using static IP addresses, a software/hardware VPN or Windows Terminal Services or similar.

See [About the Packet Filtering Firewall](#) and [Restricting Access to SSH Connections](#) for more information on how to restrict and secure network access.

Control Authentication Mechanisms and Enforce Password Restrictions

You can select different authentication mechanisms to control access to a system. In environments where many systems are involved, consider using a centralized authentication tool so that you don't need to maintain accounts across many different systems.

Also consider the different types of authentication mechanisms available. While password-level access can be convenient, you can secure an environment further by providing more restrictive mechanisms such as key, certificate, or token based authentication that often use 2-factor authentication.

When using password-style access, you can enforce restrictions to prevent common, short, or easily cracked passwords. Consider the [NIST 800-63 Digital Identity Guidelines](#), which suggest deviating from traditional password policy. Rather than forcing complicated passwords with frequent expiry and forced system lockout, consider requiring passwords that aren't easy to guess or crack and are checked against known password dictionaries.

See [Configuring User Authentication and Password Policies](#) for more information.

Follow the Principle of Least Privilege

The principle of least privilege suggests that you grant users the bare minimum privileges required to perform their jobs. The excessive granting of permissions, especially early on in an organization's lifespan when few employees must complete work within tight deadlines, can leave systems wide open for abuse. Reviewing user privileges periodically to match their current job responsibilities is considered good security practice.

This principle requires that users are assigned their own login accounts. If they require administrator access for a purpose, use `sudo` to grant access for that specific purpose.

Distributing the root user password is considered poor security practice. You can enhance the security of the root password by ensuring that it's long, difficult to guess, and contains a wide variety of special characters.

See [Checking User Accounts and Privileges](#) for more information.

Monitor System Activity

Robust system security relies on three principles: up-to-date security protocols, correct system configuration, and frequent system monitoring. Auditing and reviewing audit records addresses the third requirement. Each component within a system often has some degree of monitoring capability. You can follow the audit advice in this document and monitor audit records.

See [Using System Auditing and Monitoring](#), [Using Advanced Intrusion Detection Environment](#) and [Implementing System Process Accounting](#) for more information.

Also consider using the Ksplice known exploit detection feature with systems that have the Ksplice Enhanced client installed. That feature reports exploitation attempts from known attack vectors. When new Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures (CVEs) are discovered and patched by Ksplice, Oracle might add tripwires to the code that log when an erroneous condition is triggered to ensure that administrators can monitor systems for suspicious activity. For more information about Ksplice, see [Oracle Linux: Ksplice User's Guide](#).

Keep Up-to-date With the Latest Security Information

For information about common vulnerabilities, exposures, and errata, you can use ULN or sign up for one of the Oracle Linux mailing lists. For more information, see [Obtaining Errata and CVE Notices](#). You can also review Oracle's constantly expanding range of documentation, tutorials, and blog posts at <https://docs.oracle.com/en/operating-systems/oracle-linux/> and <https://blogs.oracle.com/linux/> for the latest information.

2

Planning for a Secure Oracle Linux Environment

This section describes how to plan a secure Oracle Linux environment based on specific security requirements.

To better understand those security requirements, consider the following questions:

Which resources must be protected?

Many resources in the production environment can be protected, such as information in databases accessed by WebLogic Server and the availability, performance, applications, and the integrity of a website. You can evaluate the resources that require protection to decide the level of security to provide for each of them.

From whom must those resources be protected?

For most websites and online services, resources must be protected from everyone on the Internet. You might also consider restricting employee access on a company intranet to only the resources to which they need access, and only granting access for highly confidential data or strategic resources to a few trusted system administrators. In some scenarios it might be better for system administrators to not have direct access to data and resources until they switch to a user account with fewer privileges.

What could happen if the protections on strategic resources fail?

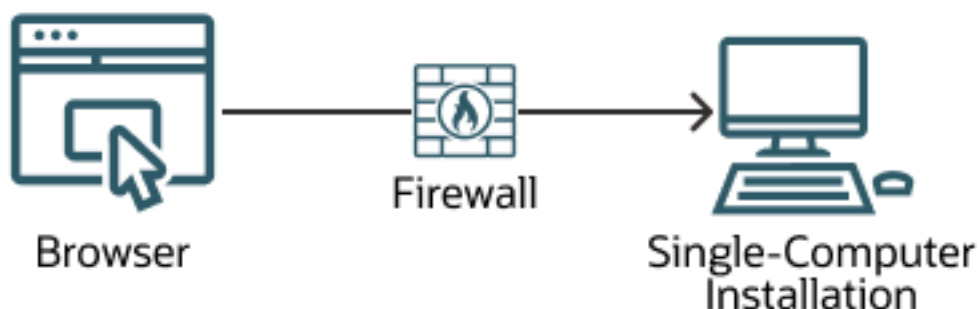
A minor fault in a security scheme could be easily detected and considered nothing more than an inconvenience. In severe cases, a fault might cause significant damage to companies or individual clients that use the website. Understanding the security ramifications of each resource can help you to ensure that they're robustly protected.

Recommended Deployment Configurations

This section describes recommended architectures for deploying Oracle products with secure Internet access.

Figure 2-1 shows a simple deployment architecture.

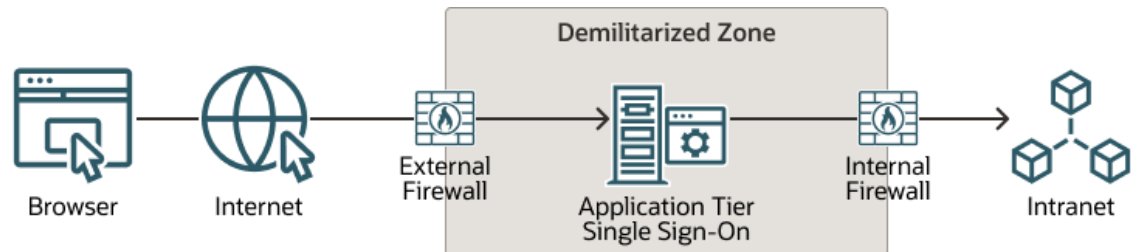
Figure 2-1 Simple Firewall Deployment Configuration



This single-computer deployment can be cost effective for small organizations. However, it can't provide high availability because all components are stored on the same computer.

Figure 2-2 shows a good practice configuration based on an Internet-Firewall-DMZ-Firewall-Intranet architecture.

Figure 2-2 DMZ Deployment Configuration



A "demilitarized zone" (DMZ) refers to a server that's isolated by firewalls from both the Internet and the intranet, and which acts a buffer between them. The firewalls that separate DMZ zones provide two essential functions:

- Blocking any traffic types that aren't allowed.
- Providing intrusion containment if any successful intrusions take over processes or processors.

Component Security

Each application software component often has its own security considerations that you can evaluate independently of those that apply to the OS. See the security guidelines for each component to decide how best to configure it to fit the security requirements for each environment.

3

Managing System Security

This section describes Oracle Linux features that administrators can use to manage system security.

Oracle Linux provides a complete security stack, from network firewall control to access control security policies, and is configured to be secure by default. Oracle Linux includes features that can help you to enhance system security, such as real-time patching, automated software updates, certificate management tools, a built-in firewall, mandatory access controls, and public key cryptography and data encryption tools. This section describes each of these features and discuss where you can find more information.

Consider using a combination of these tools and facilities to manage access that's provisioned on the system and improve the security of the OS, applications that run on the system and network connectivity.

Understanding the Importance of Updates

Keeping system software up-to-date is an important principle of an overall security strategy as described in [Overview of Security Principles](#). Updating Oracle Linux is important to avoid and protect against software vulnerabilities and known attack vectors that malicious hackers can exploit to gain unauthorized access to systems.

Oracle releases important updates to the Oracle Linux and Oracle VM software as individual package updates, known as errata.

How often Oracle Linux systems are updated depends on many factors that each system administrator must assess. One good security practice option to keep systems secure is accepting the latest available updates, because the more out-of-date a system is, the more potential vulnerabilities and attack vectors that could be exposed. The older the vulnerabilities are, the longer that malicious hackers can gather experience and expertise, and the more likely that systems with those vulnerabilities might be hacked or exploited.

Before you configure the frequency and type of updates that are installed, you must decide the level of exposure and risk that you consider to be acceptable and still meet security requirements.

Here are some examples of useful best practices to consider:

- Monitor errata as they're published by Oracle, reviewing errata as they appear and paying careful attention to security errata. Security errata are listed by severity level from critical to low.
- Schedule time to test and deploy security, bug, and enhancement errata. Testing and deploying security and bug errata as soon as possible is considered good security practice.
- Pay attention to minor releases as they often contain a combination of security patches, bug fixes, and feature enhancements. As stated before, you must decide the frequency and timing for testing and deploying the larger set of updates. If you can't update immediately, Oracle Linux Premier support offers the Premier Backport program for optional interim backports. For more information, see [About Premier Backports](#).

- Reduce the number of updates Oracle Linux requires by installing only the minimum software required to suit business needs. Minimizing the package footprint on systems can reduce the amount of time needed to perform updates for software while also reducing exposure to security attack vectors. For more information, see [Minimize and Secure the Software Footprint](#).
- For systems with mission critical applications where system reboots are disruptive, consider using tools such as Ksplice to help you prevent zero day attacks by applying security errata patches with zero downtime in memory without needing a reboot. For more information about Ksplice, see [Oracle Linux: Ksplice User's Guide](#).
- Also consider using software and automation management tools to apply software updates and deployments such as [Oracle Linux Manager](#), [Oracle Cloud Infrastructure OS Management](#), [Oracle OS Management Hub](#), [Oracle Linux Automation Manager](#), Chef, and Puppet.

Such tools can also run incremental updates to select groups of Oracle Linux systems, which can be useful when testing the impact of an update on real users in a staging environment before rolling out to production. Similarly, you can also use these tools to add RPM packages to base images so that you can tailor Oracle Linux systems and images to user roles rather than deploying the same configuration for everything.

For more recommendations that could suit highly complex production environments, see [Oracle Linux: Managing Software on Oracle Linux](#).

Installing and Updating Errata RPM Packages

You can obtain errata information directly from Oracle Linux systems by using Yum or DNF from any Oracle Linux terminal or from ULN. After assessing the errata information, you can track, install, and update errata using these tools.

Oracle Linux 8 provides tools to help you update the system often and with minimum interference. Consider using the `dnf-automatic` package to download updates on a schedule, alert you to software upgrade options and even to apply them automatically.

Always use DNF to install, update, or remove RPM packages (don't use the `rpm` command). You can use the `dnf update --security` command to update in the following ways:

- Update by CVE number,
- Update by security errata advisory number,
- Update all kernel packages to the latest kernel version that contains security errata,
- Update all security errata by severity level: critical, important, moderate, and low,
- Update all security errata to the latest release available. This option, from a security perspective, is often the best choice.

See [Oracle Linux: Managing Software on Oracle Linux](#) for more information on how to use these DNF commands.

Understanding RPM Errata Packages and Cumulative Updates

Oracle Linux is an RPM-based distribution. RPM packages are built cumulatively as Oracle releases updates consisting of security, bug, or enhancements errata. For example, release 2 for an RPM builds on release 1, and if release 1 is installed but you want to update to release 4, then the contents of releases 2 and 3 are also included in release 4.

Errata package RPM binaries include content that you can find by using the `dnf info package` command. For example:

```
dnf info bash
```

```
Last metadata expiration check: 0:00:34 ago on Thu 20 Jul 2023 06:42:40 PM GMT.
Installed Packages
Name           : bash
Version        : 4.4.20
Release        : 4.el8_6
Architecture   : x86_64
Size           : 6.5 M
Source          : bash-4.4.20-4.el8_6.src.rpm
Repository     : @System
From repo      : anaconda
Summary        : The GNU Bourne Again shell
URL            : https://www.gnu.org/software/bash
License        : GPLv3+
Description    : The GNU Bourne Again shell (Bash) is a shell or command
language       : interpreter that is compatible with the Bourne shell (sh). Bash
                : incorporates useful features from the Korn shell (ksh) and the
C shell        : (csh). Most sh scripts can be run by bash without modification.

Available Packages
Name           : bash
Version        : 4.4.20
Release        : 4.el8_6
Architecture   : src
Size           : 9.0 M
Source          : None
Repository     : ol8_baseos_latest
Summary        : The GNU Bourne Again shell
URL            : https://www.gnu.org/software/bash
License        : GPLv3+
Description    : The GNU Bourne Again shell (Bash) is a shell or command
language       : interpreter that is compatible with the Bourne shell (sh). Bash
                : incorporates useful features from the Korn shell (ksh) and the
C shell        : (csh). Most sh scripts can be run by bash without modification.
```

- **Name, version, and release information:** When you update a package, the release number of the RPM changes and the version number can change if the RPM is rebased (this happens infrequently).

You can use the `dnf updateinfo --list --installed package` command to see a list of installed RPMs for a specific package with their version, release, and associated errata

introduced. For example, this command lists all the errata applied to the bash package that also lists the name, version, release, and architecture of the package:

```
dnf updateinfo --list --installed bash
```

```
Last metadata expiration check: 0:05:41 ago on Thu 20 Jul 2023 06:42:40 PM GMT.
```

```
ELBA-2019-3594 bugfix    bash-4.4.19-10.el8.x86_64
ELBA-2020-4586 bugfix    bash-4.4.19-12.el8.x86_64
ELSA-2021-1679 Low/Sec.  bash-4.4.19-14.el8.x86_64
ELBA-2021-2030 bugfix    bash-4.4.19-14.el8_3.x86_64
ELBA-2019-2707 bugfix    bash-4.4.19-8.el8_0.x86_64
ELBA-2021-1988 bugfix    bash-4.4.20-1.el8_4.x86_64
ELBA-2021-4495 bugfix    bash-4.4.20-2.el8.x86_64
ELBA-2022-1993 bugfix    bash-4.4.20-3.el8.x86_64
ELBA-2022-5815 bugfix    bash-4.4.20-4.el8_6.x86_64
```

Note that the bash package was rebased from version 4.4.19 to version 4.4.20 when bugfix ELBA-2021-1988 was applied.

- **Informational metadata:** This metadata includes information such as a summary, description, license, and so on.
- **Cryptographic signature:** All Oracle Linux RPM packages are signed and customers can use this signature to verify the provenance and authenticity of an RPM as it's being downloaded. The person and company who builds the binary provides this signature. Enabling `gpgcheck=1` as a global default in the `/etc/dnf/dnf.conf` file ensures that all RPMs are authentic and have a valid GPG signature before the `dnf` command downloads or installs them. This is an important way to ensure that RPMs come from a trusted source and haven't been changed. All Oracle Linux images have the Oracle GPG keys installed and the `gpgcheck` option enabled by default.

 **Note:**

If you're migrating an existing system from a compatible Linux distribution to Oracle Linux, you can replace their GPG keys with Oracle keys. For example, the following script migrates a system from CentOS 8 or Rocky Linux 8 to Oracle Linux 8 and provides the option to replace their GPG keys with Oracle Linux GPG keys: <https://github.com/oracle/centos2ol>.

Ensuring RPM package security is one aspect of an overall data encryption strategy. For more information, see [About Data Encryption](#).

- **Dependency information:** This provides details about RPMs and versions of other packages that an RPM depend upon. For example, you can use the following command to list the direct dependencies for the bash RPM package:

```
dnf deplist bash
```

- A series of scripts that can be run at various stages during update or installation.

About Security Errata and CVEs

A security errata is a corrective action intended to address security vulnerabilities identified in one or more Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures (CVEs).

CVE numbers are unique, common identifiers for publicly known information about security vulnerabilities. Oracle uses CVE numbers to identify and track corrective actions driven by a reported security vulnerability. The CVE program is cosponsored by the office of Cybersecurity and Communications at the US Department of Homeland Security and is managed by the MITRE corporation.

About Bug and Enhancement Errata

A bug is a corrective action generated from an issue discovered by a customer or a vendor. Oracle normally provides the bug ID involved in the event in the errata notification. Including bug updates in a maintenance policy is considered good security practice because they can prevent issues that haven't already been planned for or affected the system yet. For example, a bug errata might prevent a problem that isn't exposed until a combination of events occur that destabilizes a system. Therefore it's important to keep Oracle Linux systems updated with bug errata.

Enhancements are incremental new features or updates provided by Oracle.

Obtaining Errata and CVE Notices

To be notified when Oracle releases new errata packages, you can subscribe to the Oracle Linux and Oracle VM errata mailing lists at <https://oss.oracle.com/mailman/listinfo/el-errata> and <https://oss.oracle.com/mailman/listinfo/oraclevm-errata>.

If you're logged in to ULN, you can also subscribe to these mailing lists by following the **Subscribe to Enterprise Linux Errata mailing list** and **Subscribe to Oracle VM Errata mailing list** links that are provided in the Errata tab.

Oracle publishes a complete list of errata made available on ULN at <https://linux.oracle.com/errata>. You can also see a published listing of Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures (CVEs) and explore their details and status at <https://linux.oracle.com/cve>.

You can also track updates to Oracle Linux yum server repositories by visiting <https://yum.oracle.com/whatsnew.html>, where you can see which packages were updated within each repository for the previous six months.

About Premier Backports

You can request through the premier backport program that errata available on a later release be backported to a previous release that you're using. The previous release you're using can qualify for a backport up to six months from the time when a new release becomes "generally available".

For example, the following table shows glibc packages available based on a package version with a hypothetically latest release of June 19, 2022:

RPM	Release Date	Backports available until
glibc-2.28-164.0.3.el8.x86_64	18-Feb-2022	18-Aug-2022

RPM	Release Date	Backports available until
		(Based on 08-Mar-2022 plus 6 months)
glibc-2.28-164.0.5.el8.x86_64	08-Mar-2022	08-Sept-2022 (Based on 16-Mar-2022 plus 6 months)
glibc-2.28-164.0.5.el8_5.3.x86_64	16-Mar-2022	16-Sept-2022 (Based on 19-Jun-2022 plus 6 months)
glibc-2.28-189.5.0.1.el8_6.x86_64	19-Jun-2022	Latest release in this example

Oracle publishes a list of RPMs that can qualify for a backport here: <https://linux.oracle.com/backport-schedule.html>. To determine when premier backport availability expires, add six months to the packages release date listed in the Release Date column. For additional information, see the description of Oracle Linux Premier support levels in the [Oracle Linux and Oracle VM Support Policies](#).

About Certificate Management

Public key cryptography provides secure communication on an insecure public network and verification of the identity of the entity at the other end of a network connection. Public key cryptography is based on establishing asymmetric pairs of secret and public keys.

OpenSSL includes an open source implementation of the TLS and SSL protocols. If a hierarchy of trust is confined to an organization's intranet, you can use OpenSSL to generate a root certificate and set up a Certificate Authority (CA) for that domain. Alternately, you can use OpenSSL to generate a certificate signing request that can be provided to a recognized CA to obtain a signed certificate that you can use in an application configuration. Low-cost domain validation certificate signing is now more obtainable if you use the IETF standardized Automatic Certificate Management Environment (ACME) protocol as described in [RFC 8555](#), reducing the requirement for costly expenditure around certificate signing and running a self-hosted CA.

For more detailed information, see [Oracle Linux: Managing Certificates and Public Key Infrastructure](#).

About Data Encryption

Cryptographic libraries included with Oracle Linux can be used by software to provide data encryption facilities. You can use data encryption to protect data that's stored or being transmitted. Data on storage devices and media can be at risk of theft or device loss. Data being transmitted over local area networks and the Internet can be intercepted or altered. By encrypting data, you can help protect it while it's in storage or in transmission, thereby providing a safer infrastructure. In addition, data encryption to protect privacy and personal data is increasingly being made a mandatory requirement in corporate security policies and by governmental regulations (for example, HIPAA, GLBA, SOX, and PCI DSS).

Oracle Linux systems provide the following strategies for protecting data:

- When installing systems and application software, only accept RPM packages that have been digitally signed by a trusted source.

To ensure that downloaded software packages are signed, set `gpgcheck=1` in the repository configuration file and import the GPG key provided by the software supplier. Oracle Linux images normally have this setting enabled as a global default in the `/etc/dnf/dnf.conf` file. You can also install RPMs using the Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) protocol, which uses encryption to protect the communications channel.

For more information, see [Oracle Linux: Managing Software on Oracle Linux](#).

- To protect against data theft, consider using full-disk encryption, especially on laptops, external hard drives, or removable devices such as USB memory sticks. Oracle Linux provides block device encryption by using the `dm-crypt` kernel module and the Linux Unified Key Setup (LUKS) format. The `cryptsetup` administration command is available in the `cryptsetup` package.

These technologies encrypt device partitions so that the data is inaccessible when a system is turned off. When the system boots and you supply the appropriate passphrase, the device is decrypted and its data is accessible. See [Oracle Linux 8: Managing Storage Devices](#) for more information about encrypting block devices. Also see the `cryptsetup(8)` manual page for general usage instructions.

- Oracle Linux uses encryption to support Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) and Secure Shell (SSH). You can use these tools to encrypt network traffic end-to-end, thereby ensuring that data is kept safe during transmission. For more information, see [Oracle Linux: Connecting to Remote Systems With OpenSSH](#) and Configuring Virtual Private Networks in [Oracle Linux: Configuring Virtual Private Networks](#).
- Oracle Linux uses encryption to store system passwords. By default, Oracle Linux uses a strong password hashing algorithm (SHA-512) and stores hashed passwords in the `/etc/shadow` file.
- Oracle Linux takes advantage of hardware-accelerated encryption on Intel CPUs that use the Advanced Encryption Standard New Instructions (AES-NI) instruction set, which speeds up the execution of AES and RC4 algorithms on the x86_64 architecture.

About the Packet Filtering Firewall

Firewalls filter incoming and outgoing network packets based on their packet header information. You can create packet filter rules that decide whether packets are accepted or rejected. If you create a rule to block a port, any request to that port is automatically rejected by the firewall and the request is ignored. Any service that's listening on a blocked port no longer processes network traffic because it doesn't receive any new packets from that port.

You can configure the Netfilter feature to act as a packet-filtering firewall that uses rules to decide whether network packets are received, dropped, or forwarded. In addition, Netfilter provides Network Address Translation (NAT) and IP masquerading to alter IP header information for routed packets. You can also set rule-based packet logging and define a dedicated log file by changing `/etc/syslog.conf`.

The `nftables` framework is the default stateful network packet filtering framework in Oracle Linux, replacing the `iptables` framework. The `nftables` framework provides improved performance over the `iptables` framework. The `nftables` framework uses components of the Netfilter infrastructure, such as the existing hooks into the networking stack, connection tracking system, the user-space queueing component, and the logging subsystem. In addition `nftables` can also classify packets.

For more information, see [Oracle Linux 8: Configuring the Firewall](#).

About SELinux

By default, SELinux is enabled automatically on new Oracle Linux installations.

Linux security has historically been based on a Discretionary Access Control (DAC) policy, which provides minimal protection from broken software or from malware that's running as a normal user or as `root`. Access to files and devices is based solely on user identity and ownership. Malware or misconfigured software can do anything with files and resources that the user that started the process can do. If the user is `root` or the application is `setuid` or `setgid` to `root`, the process can have `root`-access control over the entire file system.

The National Security Agency created Security Enhanced Linux (SELinux) to provide a finer-grained level of control over files, processes, users, and applications on Linux. The SELinux enhancement to the Linux kernel implements the Mandatory Access Control (MAC) policy, which can be used to define a security policy that provides granular permissions for all users, programs, processes, files, and devices. The kernel's access control decisions are based on all the security relevant information available, and not solely on the authenticated user identity.

When security-relevant access occurs, such as when a process tries to open a file, SELinux intercepts the operation at the kernel level. The operation only continues if a MAC policy rule allows it, otherwise SELinux blocks the operation and returns an error to the process. The kernel checks and enforces DAC policy rules before MAC rules, so it doesn't check SELinux policy rules if DAC rules have already denied access to a resource.

For more details about SELinux, including task-related information, see [Oracle Linux: Administering SELinux](#).

See also the [SELinux Project Wiki](#) and the `selinux(8)` manual page.

4

Implementing Extra Security Features and Best Practices

This section describes more ways to enhance the security of an Oracle Linux system and further information about best practices for securing an environment.

Working with Core Dumps

A core dump is a file that's produced when a process malfunctions and ends prematurely. The core dump contains an image of the process's memory. You can use a core dump to debug problems and inspect the stage of the program when it ended. You can produce core dumps on-demand or they can be created automatically on termination.

The core file, also referred to as *core*, is created in the current working directory. Note that the writing of core fails if the directory to which it's to be created is read-only, or if a file exists with the same name in that location, and that file is read-only or not a regular file.

Core dumps can contain information that an attacker could exploit. Core dumps can also take up a lot of disk space. Therefore Oracle Linux, by default, disables the core dump function. It does so by limiting the maximum size of a core dump file to 0. You can find the current core size for a system using the following `ulimit` command. For example, this command shows that the `ulimit` size for the current terminal user session is set to the default 0 value:

```
ulimit -c
```

```
0
```

If you experience problems with an application running in the current terminal session, you can enable core dumps for the session by changing the `ulimit -c` value to any integer number larger than 0. For example:

```
ulimit -c 1000
```

To make changes persist between reboots you can limit or restrict access to core dumps to various users or groups. See the `limits.conf(5)` manual page for details.

By default, the system prevents the `setuid` and `setgid` programs, programs that have changed credentials, and programs containing binaries that don't have read permission from dumping core. To ensure that this setting is still disabled, run the following command:

```
sysctl fs.suid_dumpable
```

A value of `fs.suid_dumpable = 0` indicates that the setting is still disabled.

 **Note:**

Enabling dump files for these programs isn't recommended. If, for some reason, you need to enable dump files for these programs, you can enable this dump file by setting the `fs.suid_dumpable` value to 1 or 2. A value of 1 creates core dumps that are readable by the owner of the dumping process. A value of 2 creates core dumps that are only readable by `root` for debugging purposes.

For more information about temporarily enabling core dumps to troubleshoot a malfunctioning system, see [Oracle Linux 8: Monitoring and Tuning the System](#).

Working with the Automatic Bug Reporting Tool

If the Automatic Bug Reporting Tool, `abrt`, is running then core dumps continue to be generated for a system, even if you have disabled the core dump facility. On a production system, it can optionally be disabled or uninstalled entirely.

 **Note:**

The Automatic Bug Reporting Tool has been deprecated. Consider using `systemd-coredump` feature instead. For more information about using the `coredumpctl` command, see [Oracle Linux 8: Monitoring and Tuning the System](#) and the `systemd-coredump` manual pages.

To stop and disable the `abrt-d` service entirely, run:

```
sudo systemctl disable --now abrt-d
```

When running the service, you can restrict the service so that it only analyzes core dumps for binaries installed using signed packages. You can also prevent the service from analyzing particular binaries that reveal sensitive information in a dump by adding them to a denylist.

For example, edit `/etc/abrt/abrt-action-save-package-data.conf` to set the following parameters:

```
# Require a GPG signature for a package
OpenPGPCheck = yes

# Add any package names to the Blacklist that contain binaries
# that you want abrt to not store dump data for
BlackList = nspluginwrapper, valgrind, strace, mono-core, bash

# Disable processing of unpackaged binaries
ProcessUnpackaged = no

# Add any paths to the BlackListedPaths that may contain binary
# executables that you want abrt to not store dump data for
BlackListedPaths = /usr/share/doc/*, */example*, /usr/bin/nspluginviewer, \
    /usr/lib*/firefox/plugin-container
```

Note that although the `BlackList` and `BlackListedPaths` options can be used to prevent the service from storing dump data, the dumps are still generated and written to disk for a short time before being removed, so that `abrt` can notify system administrators about a crash without using up disk space.

To prevent the core dumps from being written to disk, and prevent `abrt` from detecting crashes in an application, edit the `/etc/abrt/plugins/CCpp.conf` file and add the absolute path of the binary to the `IgnoredPaths` list. For example:

```
IgnoredPaths = /path/to/binary
```

Configuring and Using Kernel Security Mechanisms

The Linux kernel features some extra security mechanisms that enhance the security of a system. These mechanisms randomize the layout of the address space for a process or prevent code from being run in non-executable memory.

Address Space Layout Randomization

Address Space Layout Randomization (ASLR) can help defeat certain types of buffer overflow attacks. ASLR can find the base, libraries, heap, and stack at random positions in a process's address space, which makes it difficult for an attacking program to predict the memory address of the next instruction. ASLR is built into the Linux kernel and is controlled by the parameter `/proc/sys/kernel/randomize_va_space`. The `randomize_va_space` parameter can take the following values:

0

Disable ASLR. This setting is applied if the kernel is booted with the `norandmaps` boot parameter.

1

Randomize the positions of the stack, virtual dynamic shared object (VDSO) page, and shared memory regions. The base address of the data segment is immediately after the end of the executable code segment.

2

Randomize the positions of the stack, VDSO page, shared memory regions, and the data segment. This is the default setting.

You can change the setting temporarily by writing a new value to `/proc/sys/kernel/randomize_va_space`, for example:

```
echo value | sudo tee /proc/sys/kernel/randomize_va_space
```

To change the value permanently, add this setting to `/etc/sysctl.conf`:

```
kernel.randomize_va_space = value
```

Then, run the `sysctl -p` command.

If you change the value of `randomize_va_space`, it's considered good practice to test the application stack to ensure that it's compatible with the new setting.

You can optionally disable ASLR for a specific program and its child processes:

```
setarch `uname -m` -R program [args ...]
```

Data Execution Prevention or No eXecute

The Data Execution Prevention (DEP) feature, also known as No eXecute (NX), prevents an application or service from executing code in a non-executable memory region. Hardware-enforced DEP works in conjunction with the NX bit on compatible CPUs to help prevent certain types of buffer overflow attacks. This feature uses hardware capabilities to protect the system, so it's enabled by default and can't be disabled.

Oracle Linux doesn't emulate the NX bit in software for CPUs that don't implement the NX bit in hardware.

Position Independent Executables

The Position Independent Executables (PIE) feature loads executable binaries at random memory addresses so that the kernel can disallow text relocation. Developers can use this feature to code applications that load at different memory addresses each time the application loads, making it more difficult for an attacker to predict where the application is stored in memory, thereby helping to protect against memory-related exploits.

To generate a position-independent binary:

- Specify the `-fpie` option to `gcc` when compiling.
- Specify the `-pie` option to `ld` when linking.

To test whether a binary or library has been built with PIE enabled, run the following command:

```
sudo readelf -d elfname | grep -i flags
```

The command often indicates whether the `PIE` flag is set. By default, on Oracle Linux 8 binaries are typically built with this flag set, unless there's a specific reason not to do so, such as a compile issue resulting from setting this option.

Restricting Access to Kernel Ring Buffer Messages

The kernel uses a ring buffer to surface messages for troubleshooting purposes, and these messages can be viewed by running the `dmesg` command.

Threat actors can use those messages to find exploits in the system, so it's considered good security practice to ensure that only users with root permissions can run the `dmesg` command.

To check whether access is restricted, run the following command:

```
sudo sysctl kernel.dmesg_restrict
```

If the value returned is 1, then access is already restricted.

If the value returned isn't 1, or the value is missing entirely, then you can restrict access by setting the value in a configuration file that's stored in the `/etc/sysctl.d/` directory. For

example, the following command creates the `/etc/sysctl.d/dmesg-restrict` configuration file:

```
echo kernel.dmesg_restrict = 1 | sudo tee /etc/sysctl.d/dmesg-restrict
```

To apply the change without restarting the system, run the following command:

```
sudo sysctl -p /etc/sysctl.d/dmesg-restrict
```

Configuring System Cryptographic Policies

From Oracle Linux 8 onward, Oracle Linux provides a facility to set a system-wide cryptographic policy. Many applications implement cryptographic protocols to secure communications or to encrypt data. Historically, applications have maintained their own configuration of cryptographic policies in various ways, which meant that changing cryptographic policy across an entire system needed to be performed for each application and often the configuration method differed from application to application.

The ability to define a system-wide cryptographic policy that applications can hook into often reduces administrative overhead and simplifies the process. An administrator can configure the system-wide cryptographic policy and have confidence that most applications can use the same policy, by default.

Policies enable an administrator to configure:

- TLS/SSL (and DTLS) versions that are accepted
- Ciphersuites that are accepted and the preferred order
- Parameters that are accepted for certificates and key exchange, including:
 - the minimum acceptable size of parameters (DH,ECDH,RSA,DSA,ECDSA),
 - the acceptable elliptic curves (ECDH,ECDSA),
 - the acceptable signature hash functions.
- Other TLS options including safe-renegotiation

Most of the major cryptographic software on Oracle Linux is already configured to use the system-wide cryptographic policy by default. Applications that are configured to behave in this manner include important applications such as OpenSSH and bind, in addition to any applications that use the OpenSSL, GnuTLS, NSS, libkrb5 libraries and

Configuring system-wide policy doesn't enforce behavior across the system. That policy provides a common configuration across a wide variety of applications. Any application that's not designed to use the system-wide policy continues to function according to the different policy configuration that it uses. Many applications also provide options to override the system-wide cryptographic policy if required. For example, OpenSSH provides options to set different cryptographic policies on the server and client applications, and commands such as `wget` and `curl` provide options to define a custom cipher selection and order by using the `--ciphers` option, effectively overriding the system-wide policy.

The system-wide policy defines the default cryptographic behavior within applications so that you can harden a system and remove insecure protocols to match your security requirements.

Oracle Linux includes the `update-crypto-policies` command that can be used to configure which cryptographic algorithms, ciphers, and protocols are enabled on a system for

use by applications and services. That command can be used to either relax policy or to harden it further.

For more information on this tool and the applications that are affected by it, see the `crypto-policies(7)` and `update-crypto-policies(8)` manual pages.

About Predefined Policies

Oracle Linux provides four different built-in predefined cryptographic policies:

- **LEGACY:** Configures certain legacy protocols to maximize compatibility with legacy systems. It includes enabling 3DES, RC1, DSA, TLSv1.0 and TLSv1.1. It also sets a 1024 bit minimum parameter size for DH and RSA. Protocols and values specified in this policy aren't considered highly secure but aren't easily exploitable.
- **DEFAULT:** Configures standard modern protocols including TLSv1.2 and TLSv1.3, IKEv2 and SSH2. It sets a 2048 bit minimum parameter size for DH and RSA.
- **FIPS:** Configures the system to meet FIPS 140-2 requirements for cryptographic policies. This policy is enabled by the `fips-mode-setup` command used to enable FIPS mode on an Oracle Linux system. See [Configuring FIPS Mode in Oracle Linux 8](#) for more information on using this policy.
- **FUTURE:** A conservative policy level that disables SHA-1 and CBC and sets a 3072 bit minimum parameter size for DH and RSA. This policy can disable communications with many older systems but is worth exploring to decide what actions you can perform in future to ensure that applications continue to function securely.

Restrictions in these policies can change over time as new secure default values are decided.

You can use the `update-crypto-policies` tool to view the current system policy and to change which policy is applied to the system.

Reviewing the Current System-Wide Policy

Any user can review the current system-wide cryptographic policy by running:

```
update-crypto-policies --show
```

Setting the System-Wide Policy

Switching between cryptographic policies on Oracle Linux can be achieved using the `update-crypto-policies --set` command with the name of the policy. For example, to switch to the **LEGACY** policy, run:

```
sudo update-crypto-policies --set LEGACY
```

The policy is updated immediately and any applications that are enabled to use the system-wide cryptographic policy work with the new policy immediately when they're run or restarted. Because some applications might already be running using a custom policy it's good practice to reboot the system after changing policy to ensure that all applications are using the correct policy.

To switch back to the **DEFAULT** policy, run:

```
sudo update-crypto-policies --set DEFAULT
```

Extending a Policy By Using Modules

You can customize the system-wide policy by creating a policy module or a subpolicy. You can fine-tune a policy without needing to create an entire policy from scratch by creating a module. For example, if you intended to use the `DEFAULT` system policy and also disable the weaker SHA-1 hash functionality in all applications, rather than rewriting the entire `DEFAULT` system policy, you can apply a module by setting the `DEFAULT` policy with an appended module for example:

```
sudo update-crypto-policies --set DEFAULT:NO-SHA1
```

Oracle Linux provides some extra modules that have already been configured and can be used immediately in the `/usr/share/crypto-policies/policies/modules/` directory.

You can create custom modules in the `/etc/crypto-policies/policies/modules/` directory. Modules must be named in uppercase and have a lowercase `.pmod` extension. For example, you can create a module named `/etc/crypto-policies/policies/modules/NO-AES-128.pmod` to add this content to the file to disable the AES-128 cipher entirely:

```
# Disable the AES-128 cipher
cipher = -AES-128-*
```

Note that to disable the cipher, you must prefixed it with a `-` character. To enable a functionality, specify it without a prefix. In the example, the `*` character is also used to specify a wildcard so that the rule matches all modes of the AES-128 cipher.

You can also chain modules together when you set the system-wide cryptographic policy:

```
sudo update-crypto-policies --set DEFAULT:NO-SHA1:NO-AES-128
```

For more information about the syntax for policy definition files, see the `crypto-policies(7)` manual pages.

Creating a New System-Wide Cryptographic Policy

You can create a custom cryptographic policy from scratch instead of using any of the predefined policies provided with Oracle Linux. Policies can be defined in the `/etc/crypto-policies/policies/` directory. Policy file names must be uppercase and end in the lowercase suffix `.pol`. Policy files use the INI file format with standard `key = value` entries.

The predefined policies provided with Oracle Linux are stored in the `/usr/share/crypto-policies/policies/` directory. To define a custom policy, you can copy an existing policy and then configure it as you need. For example:

```
sudo cp /usr/share/crypto-policies/policies/DEFAULT.pol /etc/crypto-policies/
policies/MYPOLICY.pol
```

See the section titled "CRYPTO POLICY DEFINITION FORMAT" in the `crypto-policies(7)` manual page for more information about the file format and structure.

When you have finished editing the custom policy, you can enable it with this command:

```
sudo update-crypto-policies --set MYPOLICY
```

Remember to reboot the system after enabling a custom system-wide policy so that it's enabled for all running services.

**Note:**

Consider whether you can achieve what you need to do by extending an existing policy using a module. Maintaining a custom system-wide cryptographic policy requires that you consistently monitor new security standards and research, so by extending the predefined policies to meet security requirements you can avoid needing to maintaining an entire policy by yourself.

Checking User Accounts and Privileges

Checking the system for unlocked user accounts often is considered good security practice, for example by using this command:

```
for u in $(awk -F: '{print $1}' /etc/passwd); do sudo passwd -S "$u"; done | sort
```

The following output is displayed:

```
adm LK 2023-03-31 0 99999 7 -1 (Alternate authentication scheme in use.)
bin LK 2023-03-31 0 99999 7 -1 (Alternate authentication scheme in use.)
chrony LK 2023-06-20 -1 -1 -1 -1 (Password locked.)
clevis LK 2023-06-20 -1 -1 -1 -1 (Password locked.)
cockpit-wsinstance LK 2023-06-20 -1 -1 -1 -1 (Password locked.)
cockpit-ws LK 2023-06-20 -1 -1 -1 -1 (Password locked.)
...
```

In the output from this command, the second field shows if a user account is locked (**LK**), doesn't have a password (**NP**), or has a valid password (**PS**). The third field shows the date on which the user last changed their password. The remaining fields show the minimum age, maximum age, warning period, and inactivity period for the password and extra information about the password's status. The unit of time is days.

You can use the `passwd` command to set passwords on any accounts that aren't protected.

To lock unused accounts, use the `passwd -l` command. You can also use the `userdel` command to remove the accounts entirely.

**Caution:**

System accounts must be preserved. These are any accounts with user IDs that are less than 1000, and especially any user IDs that are less than 100.

For more information, see the `passwd(1)` and `userdel(8)` manual pages.

To specify how users' passwords are aged, edit the settings in the `/etc/login.defs` file that are described in the following table.

Setting	Description
<code>PASS_MAX_DAYS</code>	Maximum number of days for which a password can be used before it must be changed. The default value is 99,999 days.
<code>PASS_MIN_DAYS</code>	Minimum number of days that's allowed between password changes. The default value is 0 days.
<code>PASS_WARN_AGE</code>	Number of days' warning that's provided before a password expires. The default value is 7 days.

For more information, see the `login.defs(5)` manual page.

To change the length of time a user's account can be inactive before it's locked, use the `usermod` command. For example, you would set the inactivity period to 30 days as follows:

```
sudo usermod -f 30 username
```

To change the default inactivity period for new user accounts, use the `useradd` command:

```
sudo useradd -D -f 30
```

A value of `-1` specifies that user accounts are never locked because of inactivity.

For more information, see the `useradd(8)` and `usermod(8)` manual pages.

To verify that no user accounts other than `root` have a user ID of 0, you would use the following command:

```
sudo awk -F":" ' $3 == 0 { print $1 }' /etc/passwd
```

The following is the output of the previous command:

```
root
```

If you install software that creates a default user account and password, it's considered good security practice to change the vendor's default password immediately. Centralized user authentication using an LDAP implementation such as OpenLDAP can centralize user authentication and management tasks, and also reduce the risks arising from unused accounts or accounts without a password.

By default, an Oracle Linux 8 system is configured to prevent users from logging in directly as `root`. You must log in as a named user before using either the `su` or `sudo` command to perform tasks as the `root` user so that system accounting can trace the original username of any user who performs a privileged administrative action. To grant certain users authority to perform specific administrative tasks by using the `sudo` command, use the `visudo` command to configure the `/etc/sudoers` file.

For example, the following entry grants the user `user1` the same privileges as `root` when using the `sudo` command, but defines a limited set of privileges to `user2` so that they can run commands such as `systemctl`, `rpm`, and `dnf`:

```
user1          ALL=(ALL)          ALL
user2          ALL= SERVICES, SOFTWARE
```

For more information about setting up user accounts and authentication, see [Oracle Linux 8: Setting Up System Users and Authentication](#).

Configuring User Authentication and Password Policies

If you follow traditional digital identity policies, the Pluggable Authentication Modules (PAM) feature can be used to enforce strong user authentication and password policies, including rules that decide password complexity, length, age, expiration, and the reuse of previous passwords. You can configure PAM to block user access after too many failed login attempts, after normal working hours, or if too many concurrent sessions are open. Note that some of these policies are no longer considered helpful for security as they can lead users to implement their own poor security practices when storing passwords or when renewing. See <https://pages.nist.gov/800-63-3/sp800-63-3.html> for more information.

PAM is highly customizable by its use of different modules with customizable parameters. For example, the default password integrity checking module `pam_pwquality.so` tests password strength. The PAM configuration file (`/etc/pam.d/system-auth`) contains the following default entries for testing a password's strength:

```
password      requisite      pam_pwquality.so local_users_only retry=3
authtok_type=  enforce_for_root
password      requisite      pam_pwhistory.so use_authtok enforce_for_root
remember=4
password      sufficient     pam_unix.so sha512 shadow use_authtok
enforce_for_root remember=4
password      sufficient     pam_sss.so use_authtok
password      required       pam_deny.so
```

The line for `pam_pwquality.so` defines that a user gets three tries to choose a good password. From the module's default settings, the password length must a minimum of six characters, of which three characters can't be the same as a previous password. The module only tests the quality of passwords for users who are defined in the `/etc/passwd` file.

The line for `pam_unix.so` specifies that the module tests the old password that was specified in the stack before prompting for a new password and uses the SHA-512 password hashing and the `/etc/shadow` file to decide access. Note that `pam_pwquality` will have performed such checks for users that have been defined in the `/etc/passwd` file.

You can configure the control flags and module parameters to change the checks that are performed when a user changes their password:

```
password      required      pam_pwquality.so retry=3 minlen=8 difok=5 minclass=-1
password      required      pam_unix.so use_authtok sha512 shadow remember=5
password      required      pam_deny.so
```

The line for `pam_pwquality.so` specifies that a user is allowed three tries to select a good password, with a minimum of eight characters, of which five characters must be different from

the previous password, and which must contain at least one uppercase letter, one lowercase letter, one numeric digit, and one special character.

The line for `pam_unix.so` specifies that the module doesn't perform password checking, uses SHA-512 password hashing and the `/etc/shadow` file, and saves information about the previous five passwords for each user in the `/etc/security/opasswd` file.

For more information, see the `pam_deny(8)`, `pam_pwquality(8)`, and `pam_unix(8)` manual pages.

Configuring File System Mounts, File Permissions, and File Ownerships

Using separate disk partitions for OS and user data can prevent a "file system full" error from impacting the operation of a server. For example, you can create separate partitions for `/home`, `/tmp`, `/oracle`, and so on.

Establishing disk quotas can prevent a user from filling up a file system (intentionally or not) and therefore denying access to other users.

To prevent the OS files and utilities from being altered during an intrusion, you can mount the `/usr` file system with read-only permissions. If you need to update any RPMs on the file system, use the `-o remount,rw` option with the `mount` command to remount `/usr` for both read and write access. After performing the update, you can use the `-o remount,ro` option to return the `/usr` file system to read-only mode.

To limit user access to non-root local file systems such as `/tmp` or removable storage partitions, you can specify the `-o noexec, nosuid, nodev` options to `mount`. These options prevent the execution of binaries (but not scripts), prevent the `setuid` bit from having any effect, and prevent the use of device files.

To check for unowned files and directories on each file system, use the `find` command:

```
sudo find mount_point -mount -type f -nouser -o -nogroup -exec ls -l {} \;
```

Unowned files and directories can be associated with a deleted user account, and that might indicate an error with software installation or removal, or they might be a sign of an intrusion on the system. You can correct the permissions and ownership of the files and directories that you find, or remove them. Investigating and correcting the problem that led to their creation is considered good security practice.

To check for world-writable directories on each file system, use the `find` command:

```
sudo find mount_point -mount -type d -perm /o+w -exec ls -l {} \;
```

Investigating any world-writable directory that's owned by a user other than a system user is considered good security practice. If the user can remove or change any file that other users write to the directory, you can correct the permissions and ownership of any directories that you find or remove them.

You can also use the `find` command to check for `setuid` and `setgid` executables.

```
sudo find path -type f \( -perm -4000 -o -perm -2000 \) -exec ls -l {} \;
```

If the `setuid` and `setgid` bits are set, an executable can perform a task that requires other rights, such as `root` privileges. However, buffer overrun attacks can still exploit those executables to run unauthorized code with the rights of the exploited process.

Restricting Access to SSH Connections

The Secure Shell (SSH) provides protected, encrypted communication with other systems. As SSH is an entry point into the system, it's considered good security practice to disable it if it's not required.

You can edit the `/etc/ssh/sshd_config` file to restrict local access to the `root` user and remote access to certain users and groups by configuring the settings. You can also configure settings in the `/etc/ssh/sshd_config` file so that the SSH client automatically times out after a period of inactivity.

Disabling password-based authentication for SSH and to requiring public key authentication instead is considered good security practice. By doing this, you can limit access to users who own an authorized private key.

After making any changes to the configuration file, you must restart the `sshd` service for the changes to take effect.

For more information, see [Oracle Linux: Connecting to Remote Systems With OpenSSH](#) and the `sshd_config(5)` manual page.

Using System Auditing and Monitoring

The Auditing service on Oracle Linux collects data at the kernel level that you can analyze to identify unauthorized activity. Auditing collects more data in greater detail than system logging, but most audited events are uninteresting and insignificant. The process of examining audit trails to find events of interest can be a significant challenge that you can automate.

The audit configuration file, `/etc/audit/auditd.conf`, defines the data retention policy, the maximum size of the audit volume, the action to take if the capacity of the audit volume is exceeded, and the locations of local and remote audit trail volumes. The default audit trail volume is `/var/log/audit/audit.log`.

For more detailed information about auditing and monitoring Oracle Linux systems, see [Oracle Linux 8: Monitoring and Tuning the System](#).

Using Advanced Intrusion Detection Environment

Advanced Intrusion Detection Environment (AIDE) is an application that uses various tools to detect changes to particular files on a system and report on them so that you can maintain baseline file integrity and detect unauthorized changes and potential trojans.

This tool is installed as follows:

```
sudo dnf install -y aide
```

When AIDE is installed, you can change the configuration in `/etc/aide.conf`. The configuration file is used to decide which files and directories are monitored by AIDE and also how logging and output are handled.

AIDE stores its current information about a system's configuration state in a database stored in the `/var/lib/aide/aide.db`. If you store a copy of this database file at an external location then you can replace it with a known safe state for AIDE when you perform an audit. If the file doesn't yet exist, you can create one for the current system state by running:

```
sudo aide --init
```

```
sudo cp /var/lib/aide/aide.db.new.gz /var/lib/aide/aide.db.gz
```

When you have created a database, you can check file integrity at any time by running:

```
sudo aide --check
```

If no differences are found, AIDE returns the results with the following message:

```
AIDE found NO differences between database and filesystem. Looks okay!!
```

If you configure this tool to run as an automated `cron` job, then you can get regular reports to indicate changes to system configuration and state that could help with early intrusion detection.

See the `aide(1)` and `aide.conf(5)` manual pages for more information.

Implementing System Process Accounting

The `psacct` package provides the process accounting service in addition to the following utilities that you can use to monitor process activities:

ac

Displays connection times in hours for a user as recorded in the `wtmp` file (by default, `/var/log/wtmp`).

accton

Turns on process accounting to the specified file. If you don't specify a file name argument, process accounting is stopped. The default system accounting file is `/var/account/pacct`.

lastcomm

Displays information about any commands recorded in the system accounting file.

sa

Summarizes information about any commands recorded in the system accounting file.

Note:

Ensure that the file system has enough space to store the system accounting and `wtmp` files to monitor process activity. Monitoring the size of the log files and truncating them if needed is considered good security practice.

For more information, see the `ac(1)`, `accton(8)`, `lastcomm(1)`, and `sa(8)` manual pages.

Protecting the Root Directory by Using chroot Jails

A `chroot` command changes the visible root directory for running processes and their children, so it can be used to run a program with a root directory other than `/`. The program can't see or access files outside of the configured directory tree. Such an artificial root directory is called a "chroot jail", and its purpose is to limit the directory access of malicious processes and hackers. The chroot jail locks down each process and any user ID that's using it so that all they can access is the directory in which the process is running. The process is also tricked into thinking that the directory in which it's running is the root directory.



Note:

The `chroot` mechanism can't defend against intentional tampering or low-level access to system devices by privileged users. For example, a `chroot root` user could create device nodes and mount file systems on them. A program can also gain access to resources outside of a chroot jail if it can gain `root` privilege and use `chroot()` to change its current working directory to the real `root` directory. For this reason, it's considered good security practice to ensure that a chroot jail doesn't contain any `setuid` or `setgid` executables inside it that are owned by `root`.

For a `chroot` process to start successfully, you must populate the `chroot` directory with all required program files, configuration files, device nodes, and shared libraries at their expected locations relative to the level of the `chroot` directory.

Running DNS and FTP Services in a Chroot Jail

If the DNS name service daemon (`named`) runs in a chroot jail, any hacker that accesses a system by using a BIND exploit is isolated to the files under the chroot jail directory. Installing the `bind-chroot` package creates the `/var/named/chroot` directory, which becomes the chroot jail for all BIND files.

You can configure the `vsftpd` FTP server to automatically start chroot jails for clients. By default, anonymous users are placed in a chroot jail. However, local users that access an `vsftpd` FTP server are placed in their home directory. Specify the `chroot_local_user=YES` option in the `/etc/vsftpd/vsftpd.conf` file to place local users in a chroot jail based on their home directory.

Creating a Chroot Jail

To create a chroot jail:

1. Create the directory that becomes the `root` directory of the chroot jail, for example:

```
sudo mkdir /home/oracle/jail
```

2. Use the `ldd` command to decide which libraries are required by the command that you intend to run in the chroot jail, for example `/usr/bin/bash`:

```
sudo ldd /usr/bin/bash
```

The following output is displayed:

```
linux-vdso.so.1 (0x00007fffa5726000)
libtinfo.so.6 => /lib64/libtinfo.so.6 (0x00007f29127fa000)
libc.so.6 => /lib64/libc.so.6 (0x00007f29125f1000)
/lib64/ld-linux-x86-64.so.2 (0x00007f291298c000)
```

 **Note:**

Although the path is displayed as `/lib64`, the actual path is `/usr/lib64` because `/lib64` is a symbolic link to `/usr/lib64`. Similarly, `/bin` is a symbolic link to `/usr/bin`. You need to re-create such symbolic links within the chroot jail.

3. Create subdirectories of the chroot jail's root directory that have the same relative paths as the command binary and its required libraries in the real root directory, for example:

```
sudo mkdir -p /home/oracle/jail/usr/bin
```

```
sudo mkdir -p /home/oracle/jail/usr/lib64
```

4. Create the symbolic links that link to the binary and library directories in the same manner as the symbolic links that exists in the real root directory, for example:

```
sudo ln -s /home/oracle/jail/usr/bin /home/oracle/jail/bin
```

```
sudo ln -s /home/oracle/jail/usr/lib64 /home/oracle/jail/lib64
```

5. Copy the binary and the shared libraries to the directories under the chroot jail's root directory, for example:

```
sudo cp /usr/bin/bash /home/oracle/jail/usr/bin
```

```
sudo cp /usr/lib64/{libtinfo.so.5,libdl.so.2,libc.so.6,ld-linux-
x86-64.so.2} /home/oracle/jail/usr/lib64
```

Using a Chroot Jail

To run a command in a chroot jail within an existing directory (*chroot_jail*), use the following command:

```
sudo chroot chroot_jail command
```

If you don't specify a command argument, `chroot` runs with the value of the `SHELL` environment variable, or `/usr/bin/sh` if `SHELL` isn't set.

For example, you could run the `/usr/bin/bash` command in a chroot jail as follows:

```
sudo chroot /home/oracle/jail
```

Note that you can run built-in shell commands such as `pwd` in this shell, but not other commands unless you have copied their binaries and any required shared libraries to the chroot jail.

For more information, see the `chroot(1)` manual page.

FIPS 140-2 Compliance in Oracle Linux 8

Oracle Linux provides a set of cryptographic libraries, services, and user-level cryptographic applications that are compliant with the Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) Publication 140-2.

FIPS Publication 140-2, Security Requirements for Cryptographic Modules, specifies the security requirements that must be satisfied by a cryptographic module that's used within a security system to protect sensitive, but unclassified information. The NIST/CSE Cryptographic Module Validation Program (CMVP) validates cryptographic modules to FIPS 140-2. Validated products are accepted by the Federal agencies of both the USA and Canada for the protection of sensitive or designated information.

**Note:**

CMVP started accepting FIPS 140-3 submissions on September 22, 2020. Existing FIPS 140-2 validated modules remain compliant until they're sunset on September 21, 2026.

Configuring FIPS Mode in Oracle Linux 8

FIPS mode can be configured during the initial installation of Oracle Linux 8 or after installation, as described in the following sections.

Installing Oracle Linux 8 in FIPS Mode

Add `fips=1` to the kernel command line during system installation to automatically configure a new Oracle Linux 8 system to run in FIPS mode from the first boot.

The main benefit of setting FIPS mode during the installation stage is that Oracle Linux 8 generates all system keys by using FIPS compliant algorithms and continuous monitoring tests.

To verify that FIPS mode is enabled, run the following command after Oracle Linux 8 has been installed:

```
sudo fips-mode-setup --check
```

**Note:**

The method for enabling and disabling FIPS mode in this release has changed significantly from the method that was used in previous Oracle Linux releases. In particular, the `dracut-fips` package no longer exists and doesn't need to be enabled on Oracle Linux 8. Also, you no longer need to edit the GRUB configuration file.

Enabling and Disabling FIPS Mode for Existing Oracle Linux 8 Installations

You can configure a preexisting Oracle Linux 8 installation to run in FIPS mode by using the `fips-mode-setup` utility, which changes the system-wide cryptographic policy, installs the FIPS dracut module, regenerates the system ramdisk, and updates the kernel boot parameters.

 **Note:**

To enable FIPS mode in Oracle Linux containers, see the Managing Containers chapter in the [Oracle Linux: Podman User's Guide](#).

1. Enable FIPS mode:

```
sudo fips-mode-setup --enable
```

The following output is displayed:

```
Kernel initramdisks are being regenerated. This might take some time.
Setting system policy to FIPS
Note: System-wide crypto policies are applied on application start-up.
It is recommended to restart the system for the change of policies
to fully take place.
FIPS mode will be enabled.
Please reboot the system for the setting to take effect.
```

You must reboot the system for the setting to take effect.

 **Note:**

Running the previous command configures FIPS mode implicitly by setting the system-wide cryptographic policy to FIPS. Note that using the `update-crypto-policies` command to set FIPS mode isn't enough, as shown in the following output:

```
sudo update-crypto-policies --set FIPS
```

The following output is displayed:

```
Warning: Using 'update-crypto-policies --set FIPS' is not
sufficient for FIPS compliance.
Use 'fips-mode-setup --enable' command instead.
```

2. Verify that FIPS mode has been enabled correctly:

```
sudo fips-mode-setup --check
```

The following output is displayed:

```
FIPS mode is enabled.
```

3. To disable FIPS mode:

```
sudo fips-mode-setup --disable
```

The following output is displayed:

```
Setting system policy to DEFAULT
Note: System-wide crypto policies are applied on application start-up.
It is recommended to restart the system for the change of policies
to fully take place.
FIPS mode will be disabled.
Please reboot the system for the setting to take effect.
```

You must reboot the system for the setting to take effect.

For more information, see the `fips-mode-setup(8)` manual pages.

FIPS 140-2 Validated Modules in Oracle Linux 8

The following sections describe how to review FIPS 140-2 certifications and install FIPS 140-2 validated cryptographic modules in Oracle Linux 8.

Information About Modules That Have Received FIPS 140-2 Validation

The [Oracle FIPS Certifications](#) website provides the following information for each module:

- Name and description of the module.
- Status of the FIPS 140-2 validation process.

! Important:

To achieve compliance with FIPS Publication 140-2, you must use the package version that the Security Policy document specifies for each respective module only.

- Package version for the module.
- Certificate number for the module.

After NIST completes its review for each cryptographic module, the status moves from "Review Pending" or "In Progress" to "Validated." You can then click the certificate number for each cryptographic module to review its associated FIPS certificate, and each FIPS certificate links to the relevant Security Policy document for that module. See the "Life-Cycle Assurance" section of those Security Policy documents for details about each module, and instructions with which the Cryptographic officer can verify their installation and configuration.

Installing FIPS Validated Cryptographic Modules for Oracle Linux 8

After you enable FIPS mode on Oracle Linux 8, you can then install FIPS validated cryptographic modules, as required. For information about the software channels that provide packages containing FIPS validated cryptographic modules, see [Yum Repositories and ULN Channels for FIPS Validated Cryptographic Modules](#).

The following information applies to systems that are running a fully patched Oracle Linux 8 release that can install and enable FIPS cryptographic modules.

To install FIPS validated cryptographic modules, see the "Life-Cycle Assurance" section of the Security Policy document for the FIPS module that you plan to install.

The Security Policy document explains how to verify that the package is FIPS 140-2 validated, and how to configure the module for FIPS mode. See the [Oracle FIPS Certifications](#) website for the certificate number, which includes a link to the NIST FIPS 140-2 validation page. This page provides details about FIPS certification and the Security Policy document. The package versions that are listed reflect information that's found in the logical cryptographic boundary for the specific module.

Yum Repositories and ULN Channels for FIPS Validated Cryptographic Modules

The following are the dedicated Unbreakable Linux Network (ULN) channels and yum repository containing FIPS validated cryptographic modules for Oracle Linux 8:

x86_64 Platform:

- `ol8_x86_64_u4_security_validation` ULN channel
- `ol8_u4_security_validation` yum repository

aarch64 Platform:

- `ol8_aarch64_u4_security_validation` ULN channel
- `ol8_u4_security_validation` yum repository

Note that the `ol8_u4_security_validation` yum repository is a common repository name for the x86_64 and aarch64 platforms. This repository contains FIPS validated packages for both platforms and security updates for the `gnutls` and `libgcrypt` packages.

The epoch for `gnutls` and `libgcrypt` package updates with the `_fips` suffix is set to 10, so they supersede any versions of the same package that don't use the `_fips` suffix and don't contain FIPS 140-2 compliance patches. Security updates for other cryptographic modules are available from the corresponding yum repositories and ULN channels.

Security updates for the UEK6 and UEK7 cryptographic modules are available in the corresponding yum repository and ULN channel. For more information, see the [Unbreakable Enterprise Kernel documentation](#).

For more information about how to manage yum repositories and ULN channels, see [Oracle Linux: Managing Software on Oracle Linux](#).

For specific instructions on installing FIPS validated cryptographic modules, see [Installing FIPS Validated Cryptographic Modules for Oracle Linux 8](#).

6

Oracle Linux 8 Common Criteria Certification

Oracle Linux 8.4 was certified in April 2023 under the Canadian Common Criteria Scheme and has proven Exact Conformance against the Protection Profile for General Purpose Operating Systems (OSPP) 4.2.1.

Certificates awarded in Canada and more than 16 other countries are recognized by over 31 countries under the Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement (CCRA).

The certifications include the following evaluated security functionality:

- Security Audit
- Cryptographic support
- Identification and Authentication
- User Data Protection
- Security Management
- Self-protection
- TLS and SSH protocols

Important:

To achieve compliance, the Common Criteria evaluated package set must be selected at installation time, in accordance with the description that has been provided in the Common Criteria Guide for the Oracle Linux 8 release that's installed. For more information, see [Common Criteria Guide for Oracle Linux 8.4](#).

For more information about Common Criteria certification, see the following references:

- [External Security Evaluations](#)
- [Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement](#)
- [Protection Profile for General Purpose Operating Systems](#)

Security Considerations for Developers

This section provides information for developers about how they can create secure applications for Oracle Linux, and how to extend Oracle Linux to access external systems without compromising security.

Design Principles for Secure Coding

Follow these design principles to enhance security at the source code level:

Least privilege

A process or user is granted only those privileges that are necessary to complete a task. User privileges are assigned according to their role, and all others are denied. To create a minimal protection domain, assign permissions when a process or thread requires them and removed after. This principle limits the potential damage that can result from attacks and user errors.

Economy of mechanism

Keep the design straightforward so that fewer things can go wrong, fewer inconsistencies can emerge, and the code is easier to understand and debug.

Complete mediation

Check every try to access to a resource, rather than only the first. For example, Linux checks access permissions when a process opens a file but not after. If a file's permissions change while a process has the file open, this can result in unauthorized access. Permissions could be checked whenever an open file is accessed but in practice, such checking is considered to be an unnecessary overhead because of the circumstances under which access was first obtained.

Open design

Share the code's design or implementation. An open back door to a system is only as secure as the knowledge of its existence, so empowering others to help you find those back doors and close them before they're discovered is considered good security practice. This principle doesn't apply to information such as passwords or cryptographic keys, knowledge of which is best shared among as few people as possible. For that reason, many secure authentication schemes also rely on biometric identification or the possession of a physical artifact such a hardware token or smart card, in addition to knowledge of a PIN code or password.

Separation of privilege

Divide the code into modules, where each module requires a specific, limited set of privileges to perform a specific task. You can require several privileges to grant access to a sensitive operation. This principle ensures separation of duty and provides defense in depth. For example, a main thread that has no privileges can generate a privileged thread to perform a task. A successful attack against the main thread would only gain minimal access to the system.

Least common mechanism

Isolate users and their activities from each other. Users sharing processes or threads and information channels wouldn't be considered good security practice.

Fail-safe defaults

Deny access to an operation by default. If a user without the necessary privileges tries to perform an operation it's denied and the system is still as secure as it was before the operation started.

Accountability

Log the user and their privileges for each action that they try to perform. You can rotate and archive logs to avoid filling up a file system.

Psychological acceptability

Select security mechanisms that are straightforward to install, configure, and use so that a user isn't tempted to try to bypass them.

General Guidelines for Secure Coding

Follow these coding practices to enhance security at the source code level:

- Check that input data is what the program expects by performing type, length, and bound checking. Inputs include command line arguments and environment variables in addition to data that a user enters.
- Check input data for the inclusion of constructs such as shell commands, SQL statements, and any XML or HTML code that might be used in an injection attack.
- Check the type, length, and bounds of arguments to system calls and library routines. If possible, use library routines that guard against buffer overflows.
- Use full pathnames for file-name arguments, don't use files in world-writable directories, verify that a file being written to isn't a symbolic link, and protect against the unintended overwriting of existing files.
- Check the type, length, and bounds of values returned by system calls and library routines. Make the code respond appropriately to any error codes that system calls and library functions set or return.
- Don't assume the state of the shell environment. Check any settings that a program inherits from the shell, such as the user file-creation mask, signal handling, file descriptors, current working directory, and environment variables, especially `PATH` and `IFS`. Reset the settings if needed.
- Perform assert checking on variables that can take a finite set of values.
- Log any information about privileged actions and error conditions. Don't let the program dump a core file on an end-user system.
- Don't echo passwords to the screen or send or store them as clear text. Before sending or storing a password, combine it with a salt value and use a secure one-way algorithm such as SHA-512 to create a hash.
- If the program uses a pseudo random number generating routine, verify that the numbers that it generates are sufficiently random to match security requirements. Also use a good random seed that a potential attacker can't be expected to predict. See RFC 4086, Randomness Requirements for Security, for more information.
- Enable Address Space Layout Randomization (ASLR) on the host system as this feature can help defeat certain types of buffer overflow attacks. See [Address Space Layout Randomization](#).
- When compiling and linking a program, use the Position Independent Executables (PIE) feature to generate a position-independent binary. See [Position Independent Executables](#).

- Consider using `chroot()` to confine the operating boundary of a program to a specified location within a file system.
- Don't run a shell command by calling `popen()` or `syscall()` from within a program, especially from a `setuid` or `setgid` program.

The following guidelines apply if a program has its `setuid` or `setgid` bit set so that it can perform privileged actions on behalf of a user who haven't been granted those privileges:

- Don't set the `setuid` or `setgid` bit on shell scripts. However, if you use Perl scripts that are `setuid` or `setgid`, you can run `perl` in "taint mode," which can be more secure than using similar C code. See the `perlsec(1)` manual page for details.
- Restrict the use of the privilege that `setuid` or `setgid` grants to the functionality that requires it, and then return the effective UID or GID to that of the user. If possible, perform the privileged functionality in its own monitored thread or process.
- Don't run a `setuid` or `setgid` program inside a child processes using `execvp()` or `execvp()`, which use the `PATH` environment variable.

General Guidelines for Network Programs

Follow these guidelines to enhance the security of network programs:

- Perform a reverse lookup on an IP address to obtain the fully qualified domain name, and then use that domain name look up the IP address. Ensure that both IP addresses are identical.
- Protect a service against Denial of Service (DoS) attacks by pausing the processing of requests if it becomes overloaded.
- Set timeouts on read and write requests over the network.
- Check the content, bounds, value, and type of data received over the network, and reject any data that doesn't conform to what the program expects.
- Use certificates or preshared keys to authenticate the local and remote ends of the network connection.
- Use encryption technology such as TLS or SSL to secure data sent over the network connection.
- Wherever possible, use existing networking protocols and technologies whose security characteristics are widely understood.
- Log any information about successful and unsuccessful connection attempts, data reception, and transmission errors, and changes to the service state.