INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING
Security Command Center
TLP:CLEAR
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cPanel and WHM Patch Three Vulnerabilities Spanning Privilege Escalation, Code Execution, and DoS, Hosting Infrastructure at Risk

CVE VULNERABILITY | **MEDIUM** | CVSS 5.0

SCC Item ID	SCC-CVE-2026-0150
Type	CVE Vulnerability
CVE ID	CVE-2026-29201
Severity	MEDIUM
CVSS Base Score	5.0
EPSS Score	0.0004 (12th percentile)
Affected Products	cPanel, WHM (Web Host Manager), specific version ranges not confirmed from available source data
Published	2026-05-09T03:16:00
Discovery Source	Rss

Executive Summary

cPanel has patched three vulnerabilities in its cPanel and WHM hosting management platform, including flaws enabling privilege escalation, remote code execution, and denial of service. These products underpin shared and managed hosting environments, meaning a single compromised server can affect multiple customer websites and tenants simultaneously. Organizations running cPanel/WHM should apply available security updates promptly; the attack surface is administrative infrastructure, not end-user systems.

Technical Analysis

cPanel released a security update (WP2, dated May 8, 2026) addressing three vulnerability classes across cPanel and WHM. CVE-2026-29201 is the confirmed identifier for the disclosed flaw; it targets insufficient input validation (CWE-20) in the feature file loading mechanism. The broader patch set addresses: privilege escalation (CWE-269, MITRE T1548/T1068), remote code execution via code injection (CWE-94, MITRE T1059/T1190), and resource exhaustion/denial of service (CWE-400, MITRE T1499). CVSS base score and vector require direct NVD verification; sources indicate possible discrepancy between 4.3 and 5.0. [AUDITOR NOTE: Resolve CVSS discrepancy before finalizing, access nvd.nist.gov/vuln/detail/CVE-2026-29201 directly]. EPSS score is 0.0004 (12th percentile), indicating low observed exploitation probability at time of publication.

Not listed in CISA KEV. Specific affected version ranges are not confirmed from available source data; consult the cPanel vendor advisory directly. Specific CVE identifiers for the RCE and DoS components are not confirmed in available source data; consult the cPanel advisory directly for the full patch scope. Attack vector is administrative interfaces (WHM/cPanel control panels); exploitation of RCE or privilege escalation in a shared hosting context carries tenant-level blast radius. Sources: NVD (verification pending), cPanel vendor advisory (not yet directly accessed).

Action Checklist

1. Containment: Identify all cPanel and WHM instances in your environment. Restrict WHM administrative access (port 2087) to trusted IP ranges via firewall rules or cPanel's Host Access Control if patching cannot be completed immediately. Do not expose WHM to the open internet during patching.
2. Detection: Review cPanel and WHM access logs (/usr/local/cpanel/logs/access_log, /var/log/messages) for anomalous feature file loading events, unexpected privilege changes, or repeated failed/successful API calls from unusual source IPs. Check for unexpected cron entries, new user accounts, or modified sudoers entries that could indicate post-exploitation privilege escalation (T1548/T1068). No public IOC signatures are confirmed at this time.
3. Eradication: Apply the cPanel/WHM WP2 Security Update released May 8, 2026. Use cPanel's built-in update mechanism (WHM > cPanel > Upgrade to Latest Version) or run '/scripts/upcp' on the server. Confirm the installed build version matches the patched release by consulting the cPanel security advisory at support.cpanel.net. Verify all three CWE classes are addressed in the installed build.
4. Recovery: After patching, verify WHM and cPanel service integrity. Audit active sessions and terminate any unrecognized authenticated sessions. Review file permissions on feature files and administrative configuration directories for unauthorized modifications. Monitor server logs for 24-48 hours post-patch for any indicators of pre-patch exploitation activity.
5. Post-Incident: Assess whether WHM administrative interfaces are internet-exposed without compensating controls. Implement IP allowlisting for WHM access as a standing control. Evaluate whether automated cPanel update policies are in place to reduce patch lag on future security releases. Map this event to CIS Control 7 (Continuous Vulnerability Management) and document any gap in patch SLA for hosting infrastructure.

IR / Forensic Enrichment

Triage Priority	URGENT
Escalation Criteria	Escalate to incident commander and notify hosted tenants if post-patch log review reveals API calls to account creation or password reset endpoints from non-trusted IPs prior to patch application, or if forensic artifacts (new accounts, modified sudoers, unexpected SUID binaries) confirm active exploitation of the privilege escalation or RCE components — given WHM's multi-tenant architecture, confirmed pre-patch exploitation constitutes a potential breach affecting all hosted customer accounts on the compromised server and may trigger contractual or regulatory notification obligations.

Recovery Notes	After applying the cPanel WP2 Security Update (advisory ID 40311033698327), verify recovery by comparing the post-patch 'whmapi1 servicestatus' output and '/usr/local/cpanel/version' build string against the advisory's confirmed patched release, and diff /etc/passwd, /etc/sudoers, and /usr/local/cpanel/features/ against pre-incident baselines to confirm no persistence mechanisms survive the patch. Monitor /usr/local/cpanel/logs/access_log and /var/log/secure continuously for 48 hours post-patch, specifically for API calls targeting account management endpoints from IPs outside your established trusted ranges, which would indicate either pre-patch implanted access or ongoing exploitation attempts against a not-yet-fully-patched node. If any tenant-impacting indicators are confirmed, do not close the incident — re-enter containment and initiate tenant notification procedures before declaring recovery complete.
Forensic Artifacts	/usr/local/cpanel/logs/access_log — Parse for POST requests to WHM JSON API endpoints (createacct, passwd, addzonerecord, addpkg) from non-trusted source IPs in the window between advisory publication (May 8, 2026) and patch application; these are the specific API calls an attacker exploiting the RCE or privilege escalation components would generate to establish persistence or expand access. | /usr/local/cpanel/features/ directory — File modification timestamps on cPanel feature files (used to control per-account feature access) that post-date the last legitimate admin session but pre-date patch application would be a direct artifact of the privilege escalation CWE being exploited to grant elevated feature access to tenant accounts. | /etc/sudoers and /etc/sudoers.d/* — New or modified entries granting sudo access to cPanel service accounts (cpanel, nobody, nobody, or named hosting tenant usernames) that were not present in the pre-incident baseline indicate successful local privilege escalation following exploitation of CVE-2026-29201. | /var/spool/cron/ and /etc/cron.d/ — Cron entries owned by non-root users or created after the advisory date that execute scripts from world-writable directories (e.g., /tmp, /var/tmp, or individual cPanel account home directories under /home/) are a primary persistence mechanism for post-exploitation activity in cPanel shared hosting environments. | /var/cpanel/sessions/ — Active or recently expired WHM session files with source IP addresses outside the trusted administrative range established during containment document any unauthorized authenticated WHM sessions that existed during the vulnerability window, providing evidence of whether the authentication bypass or privilege escalation component was leveraged to obtain a valid admin session.

Per-Action IR Details

Containment — Identify all cPanel and WHM instances in your environment. Restrict WHM administrative access (port 2087) to trusted IP ranges via firewall rules or cPanel's Host Access Control if patching cannot be completed immediately. Do not expose WHM to the open internet during the remediation window.

NIST Phase: Containment

Reference: NIST 800-61r3 §3.3 — Containment Strategy

Controls: NIST IR-4 (Incident Handling), NIST SC-7 (Boundary Protection), CIS 4.4 (Implement and Manage a Firewall on Servers), CIS 4.5 (Implement and Manage a Firewall on End-User Devices)

Compensating: Without enterprise NAC or SIEM, use cPanel's built-in Host Access Control (WHM > Security Center > Host Access Control) to immediately restrict /etc/hosts.allow and /etc/hosts.deny for port 2087. At the OS level, run: 'iptables -I INPUT -p tcp --dport 2087 -s -j ACCEPT && iptables -I INPUT -p tcp --dport 2087 -j DROP' and persist with 'iptables-save > /etc/iptables/rules.v4'. For cPanel-managed CSF (ConfigServer Security & Firewall) installations, edit /etc/csf/csf.allow to add trusted IPs and run 'csf -r' to reload. Enumerate all WHM instances across your fleet with: 'grep -r "2087" /etc/firewall* 2>/dev/null; ss -tlnp | grep 2087'.

Evidence: Before restricting access, capture a snapshot of current WHM firewall rules ('iptables -L -n -v > /tmp/fw_state_$(date +%F).txt'), active connections to port 2087 ('ss -tnp sport = :2087 >

/tmp/whm_connections_$(date +%F).txt'), and the current /etc/hosts.allow and /etc/hosts.deny contents. Document all source IPs currently connected or recently connected to WHM to establish a baseline for later anomaly comparison. Preserve /var/log/secure or /var/log/auth.log entries showing recent WHM authentication attempts before any firewall changes truncate visibility.

Detection — Review cPanel and WHM access logs (/usr/local/cpanel/logs/access_log, /var/log/messages) for anomalous feature file loading events, unexpected privilege changes, or repeated failed/successful API calls from unusual source IPs. Check for unexpected cron entries, new user accounts, or modified sudoers entries that could indicate post-exploitation privilege escalation (T1548/T1068). No public IOC signatures are confirmed at this time.

NIST Phase: Detection Analysis

Reference: NIST 800-61r3 §3.2 — Detection and Analysis

Controls: NIST AU-6 (Audit Record Review, Analysis, and Reporting), NIST AU-3 (Content of Audit Records), NIST SI-4 (System Monitoring), NIST IR-5 (Incident Monitoring), CIS 8.2 (Collect Audit Logs)

Compensating: Without a SIEM, run these targeted commands: (1) Parse WHM access logs for API abuse: 'grep -E "(POST|GET).*(api|json_api).*(createacct|passwd|addzonerecord|addpkg)" /usr/local/cpanel/logs/access_log | awk '{print $1, $7, $9}' | sort | uniq -c | sort -rn | head -50' — flag any non-trusted IP issuing account creation or password reset API calls. (2) Check for privilege escalation via new sudoers entries: 'find /etc/sudoers.d/ -newer /etc/passwd -ls; grep -v "^#" /etc/sudoers | grep -v "^$"'. (3) Detect new system accounts created post-advisory date: 'awk -F: '$3 >= 1000 && $3 /dev/null)"; done'. (4) Hunt for modified cron entries: 'find /var/spool/cron/ /etc/cron.d/ /etc/cron.daily/ -newer /usr/local/cpanel/cpanel -ls 2>/dev/null'. Deploy the Sigma rule equivalent manually by grepping cPanel's error_log for feature file anomalies: 'grep -iE "(feature|priv|escalat|execut|inject)" /usr/local/cpanel/logs/error_log | tail -500'.

Evidence: Preserve intact copies of /usr/local/cpanel/logs/access_log, /usr/local/cpanel/logs/error_log, /var/log/messages, and /var/log/secure BEFORE log rotation occurs — cPanel's default log rotation may purge evidence within 24 hours. For MITRE T1548 (Abuse Elevation Control Mechanism) and T1068 (Exploitation for Privilege Escalation) artifacts specific to cPanel: capture the output of 'last -F' and 'lastb -F' to record all successful and failed WHM/SSH logins with timestamps; dump current /etc/passwd, /etc/shadow (hashes only), and /etc/sudoers for forensic baseline; and record all SUID/SGID binaries with 'find / -perm /6000 -type f -ls 2>/dev/null > /tmp/suid_inventory_$(date +%F).txt' to detect any newly introduced escalation binaries placed by an attacker exploiting the privilege escalation component of this advisory.

Eradication — Apply the cPanel/WHM WP2 Security Update released May 8, 2026. Use cPanel's built-in update mechanism (WHM > cPanel > Upgrade to Latest Version) or run '/scripts/upcp' on the server. Confirm the installed build version matches the patched release listed in the cPanel advisory at support.cpanel.net (advisory ID 40311033698327). Verify all three CWE classes are addressed in the installed build.

NIST Phase: Eradication

Reference: NIST 800-61r3 §3.4 — Eradication

Controls: NIST SI-2 (Flaw Remediation), NIST SI-7 (Software, Firmware, and Information Integrity), NIST CM-6 (Configuration Settings), CIS 7.3 (Perform Automated Operating System Patch Management), CIS 7.4 (Perform Automated Application Patch Management)

Compensating: For teams managing multiple cPanel servers without a centralized patch orchestration platform, script the update and verification across your fleet using SSH: 'for host in $(cat cpanel_hosts.txt); do ssh root@$host "/scripts/upcp --force && /usr/local/cpanel/bin/whmapi1 version | grep -E \"version|build\"" ; done > /tmp/patch_results_$(date +%F).txt'. After patching, verify the build string against the advisory's patched version by running '/usr/local/cpanel/cpkeyclt' and comparing '/usr/local/cpanel/version' output. To confirm all three vulnerability classes (privilege escalation, RCE, DoS) are addressed — not just the highest severity — cross-reference the installed build number against cPanel advisory ID 40311033698327 at support.cpanel.net; do not assume a successful upcp run automatically confirms all three CWEs are remediated if the build number does not match the advisory's specified patched release.

Evidence: Before running /scripts/upcp, capture a pre-patch filesystem integrity baseline of cPanel's core binaries: 'rpm -Va 2>/dev/null | grep -E "(cpanel|whm)" > /tmp/rpm_integrity_prepatch_$(date +%F).txt' and 'find /usr/local/cpanel/bin/ /usr/local/cpanel/scripts/ -type f -newer /usr/local/cpanel/cpanel -ls > /tmp/modified_binaries_prepatch_$(date +%F).txt'. If the server may have been compromised via the RCE component prior to patching, preserve a memory snapshot using 'strings /proc/*/exe 2>/dev/null | grep -vE "^/"' and capture active process list with full command lines ('ps auxf > /tmp/process_snapshot_$(date +%F).txt') before the update potentially overwrites attacker-modified binaries. This evidence is critical for confirming whether exploitation preceded your patch deployment.

Recovery — After patching, verify WHM and cPanel service integrity. Audit active sessions and terminate any unrecognized authenticated sessions. Review file permissions on feature files and administrative configuration directories for unauthorized modifications. Monitor server logs for 24-48 hours post-patch for any indicators of pre-patch exploitation activity.

NIST Phase: Recovery

Reference: NIST 800-61r3 §3.5 — Recovery

Controls: NIST IR-4 (Incident Handling), NIST SI-7 (Software, Firmware, and Information Integrity), NIST AU-11 (Audit Record Retention), NIST AC-17 (Remote Access), CIS 5.3 (Disable Dormant Accounts), CIS 5.4 (Restrict Administrator Privileges to Dedicated Administrator Accounts)

Compensating: To audit and terminate unrecognized WHM sessions without an EDR platform: (1) List all active cPanel/WHM sessions: 'whmapi1 list_sessions' or inspect session files in '/var/cpanel/sessions/' — look for sessions with source IPs outside your trusted ranges established during containment. (2) Terminate suspect sessions: 'whmapi1 kill_session session_id='. (3) Verify feature file integrity — cPanel feature files live in /usr/local/cpanel/features/; run 'find /usr/local/cpanel/features/ /usr/local/cpanel/etc/ -newer /usr/local/cpanel/cpanel -type f -ls' to identify any files modified after the known patch timestamp. (4) For post-patch monitoring without a SIEM, configure a cron job to run every 15 minutes: 'tail -n 1000 /usr/local/cpanel/logs/access_log | grep -E "(401|403|500|POST.*api)" >> /tmp/post_patch_anomalies.log' and review the output at the 24 and 48-hour marks.

Evidence: During the recovery phase, collect and preserve: (1) Post-patch service verification output from 'whmapi1 servicestatus' to confirm all three affected service components are running patched binaries. (2) File permission audit results for /usr/local/cpanel/features/ and /var/cpanel/users/ — any world-writable or unexpectedly modified feature files would indicate exploitation of the privilege escalation CWE prior to patching. (3) A diff of /etc/passwd, /etc/shadow, and /etc/sudoers against the baseline captured during the detection phase to confirm no unauthorized accounts or privilege grants persist post-patch. These artifacts together confirm whether recovery is clean or whether a deeper compromise requiring full server rebuild is warranted.

Post-Incident — Assess whether WHM administrative interfaces are internet-exposed without compensating controls. Implement IP allowlisting for WHM access as a standing control. Evaluate whether automated cPanel update policies are in place to reduce patch lag on future security releases. Map this event to CIS Control 7 (Continuous Vulnerability Management) and document any gap in patch SLA for hosting infrastructure.

NIST Phase: Post Incident

Reference: NIST 800-61r3 §4 — Post-Incident Activity (Lessons Learned)

Controls: NIST IR-4 (Incident Handling), NIST IR-8 (Incident Response Plan), NIST SI-5 (Security Alerts, Advisories, and Directives), NIST RA-3 (Risk Assessment), CIS 7.1 (Establish and Maintain a Vulnerability Management Process), CIS 7.2 (Establish and Maintain a Remediation Process), CIS 4.4 (Implement and Manage a Firewall on Servers)

Compensating: Without a vulnerability management platform, establish these standing controls for cPanel/WHM environments: (1) Subscribe to cPanel's security announcement RSS feed (https://news.cpanel.net) and configure a free RSS-to-email bridge (e.g., IFTTT or rss2email) so new advisories trigger immediate notification. (2) Automate cPanel updates by setting CPANEL_UPDATENOW=1 in /etc/cpupdate.conf and configuring '/usr/local/cpanel/scripts/upcp --cron' as a nightly cron job on all servers — document this as your baseline patch SLA for hosting infrastructure. (3) For standing IP allowlisting, manage /etc/hosts.allow centrally using a shared configuration file pushed via rsync or a simple Ansible playbook to ensure WHM port 2087 remains restricted across all nodes whenever new servers are provisioned.

Evidence: For lessons-learned documentation, compile: (1) A timeline delta between cPanel's advisory publication date (May 8, 2026) and your patch completion date per server — this is your measurable patch SLA gap for hosting infrastructure. (2) The firewall audit results showing which WHM instances had port 2087 exposed to the internet at the time of advisory, derived from the 'ss' and iptables snapshots captured during containment. (3) The total count of cPanel accounts (tenants) hosted on affected servers, documented via 'whmapi1 listaccts | grep -c domain' — this quantifies the multi-tenant blast radius and informs whether breach notification obligations to hosted customers apply, given that a single compromised WHM server can affect all tenant sites simultaneously.

Detection Guidance

No public exploit code or confirmed IOCs are available for CVE-2026-29201 at this time. Detection should focus on behavioral indicators in cPanel and WHM logs. Key log paths: /usr/local/cpanel/logs/access_log (cPanel/WHM HTTP access), /usr/local/cpanel/logs/error_log, /var/log/secure or /var/log/auth.log (privilege changes, sudo usage). Look for: unexpected feature file loading errors or unusual API calls to WHM endpoints from non-administrative source IPs; privilege escalation indicators such as new entries in /etc/sudoers or unexpected setuid binary execution; signs of code injection such as unexpected child processes spawned from cPanel/WHM daemons; high-volume repeated requests to WHM endpoints that could indicate DoS probing. For environments with SIEM integration, alert on: process spawning anomalies from cpaneld or whostmgrd parent processes; authentication success events from IPs outside established administrative ranges.

Framework Mappings

MITRE-ATTACK

- **T1059** — Command and Scripting Interpreter
- **T1499** — Endpoint Denial of Service
- **T1548** — Abuse Elevation Control Mechanism
- **T1068** — Exploitation for Privilege Escalation
- **T1190** — Exploit Public-Facing Application

NIST-800-53R5

- **CM-7** — Least Functionality
- **SI-3** — Malicious Code Protection
- **SI-4** — System Monitoring
- **SI-7** — Software, Firmware, and Information Integrity
- **SC-5** — Denial-of-Service Protection
- **AC-6** — Least Privilege
- **CM-6** — Configuration Settings
- **SC-7** — Boundary Protection
- **SI-2** — Flaw Remediation
- **CA-8** — Penetration Testing
- **RA-5** — Vulnerability Monitoring and Scanning
- **SI-10** — Information Input Validation

OWASP-TOP10-2021

- **A01:2021** — Broken Access Control
- **A03:2021** — Injection

CIS-V8

- **5.4** — Restrict Administrator Privileges to Dedicated Administrator Accounts
- **6.8** — Define and Maintain Role-Based Access Control
- **16.10** — Apply Secure Design Principles in Application Architectures
- **13.8** — Deploy a Network Intrusion Prevention Solution
- **7.3** — Perform Automated Operating System Patch Management
- **7.4** — Perform Automated Application Patch Management

ISO-27001-2022

- **A.8.26** — Application security requirements
- **A.8.8** — Management of technical vulnerabilities
- **A.5.21** — Managing information security in the ICT supply chain

SOC2-TSC

- **CC9.2** — Manages risks associated with vendors and business partners
- **CC6.3** — Authorizes, modifies, or removes access

MITRE ATT&CK Mapping

Technique ID	Technique Name	Tactic
T1059	Command and Scripting Interpreter	Execution
T1499	Endpoint Denial of Service	Impact
T1548	Abuse Elevation Control Mechanism	Privilege-Escalation
T1068	Exploitation for Privilege Escalation	Privilege-Escalation
T1190	Exploit Public-Facing Application	Initial-Access

Sources

Source	URL	Tier
Security News	https://thehackernews.com/2026/05/cpanel-whm-patch-3-new-vulnerabil...	T3
CVE-2026-29201 Detail - NVD	https://nvd.nist.gov/vuln/detail/CVE-2026-29201	T1

Source	URL	Tier
CVE-2026-29201 - cPanel & WHM / WP2 Security Update	https://support.cpanel.net/hc/en-us/articles/40311033698327-Securit...	T3
cPanel & WHM Security Update CVE-2026-29201 ...	https://www.reddit.com/r/cpanel/comments/1t6wf5n/cpanel_whm_securit...	T3
CVE-2026-29201 cPanel Vulnerability Patch Now ... - PurpleOps	https://purple-ops.io/blog/cpanel-cve-2026-29201-may-09	T3

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