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Mozilla Bumps Bug Bounty to $3,000

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The new price tag is a major increase over the payment of $500 with which the Mozilla Foundation launched its bug bounty program six years ago. Mozilla is one of a handful of vendors who make it known publicly that it will pay for bugs found in their software and reported directly to them. The foundation does set out quite a few conditions in order for a researcher to claim the payment, namely that the bug must be a critical security flaw and must be remotely exploitable.

Lucas Adamski, director of security engineering at Mozilla, said that the organization decided to increase its payments in reaction to the changes that have occurred in the security landscape since the program launched in 2004.

"For new bugs reported starting July 1st, 2010 UTC we are changing the bounty payment to $3,000 US per

eligible security bug. A lot has changed in the 6 years since the Mozilla program was announced, and we believe that one of the best way to keep our users safe is to make it economically sustainable for security researchers to do the right thing when disclosing information," Adamski wrote in a blog post. "We have also clarified the products covered under the bounty to better reflect the threats we are focused upon. We still include Firefox and Thunderbird obviously, but we also added Firefox Mobile and any Mozilla services that those products rely upon for safe operation."

In order to be eligible for the $3,000 payment, a researcher must meet the following conditions with his bug, according to Mozilla:

- Security bug must be original and previously unreported.
- Security bug must be a remote exploit.
- Security bug is present in the most recent supported, beta or release candidate version of Firefox, Thunderbird, Firefox Mobile, or in Mozilla services which could compromise users of those products, as released by Mozilla Corporation or Mozilla Messaging.
- Security bugs in or caused by additional 3rd-party software (e.g. plugins, extensions) are excluded from the Bug Bounty program.

The increased bug bounty by Mozilla is a good indication of the direction things have been taking in the vulnerability research arena in the last couple of years. Since organizations such as TippingPoint's Zero Day Initiative and VeriSign's iDefense have begun buying vulnerabilities from researchers, establishing a legitimate public marketplace for bugs, there has been a steady increase in pressure from researchers on vendors to do the same and offer bug bounties.

In addition to Mozilla, Google also has established a bug bounty program. However, none of the larger software vendors such as Microsoft or Oracle have taken that step. Some researchers see that as an inevitiability, however.

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"Everyone can agree there's still room for improvement on third parties discovering vulnerabilities. It's correct that independent researchers need something more than a one-line acknowledgement. That's not enough for them to spend four months on a vulnerability, then have to prove it to the vendor and do a lot of the work for them. What Microsoft and others are concerned about is it turning into a ransom situation, but I don't see that," Marc Maiffret, CTO of eEye Digital Security said in a recent interview with Threatpost. "This is an important thing. There's not enough dialogue between the researchers and Microsoft or other vendors. They're not

really talking. It's just as much Microsoft as the researchers. The researchers never say what Microsoft can do to make them happy. That hasn't happened yet. It's crucial because there was a significant number of guys responsibly reporting to Microsoft. And now they're not because they're being sold to defense contractors or underground buyers or whatever."

One other detail of the Mozilla bug bounty program: Researchers who report a bug also get a Mozilla t-shirt. Which is nice.

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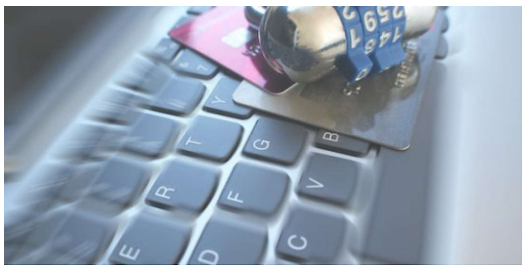

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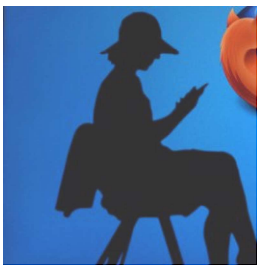

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