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MICROSOFT WINDOWS SERVER 2025 SECURITY TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE (STIG) OVERVIEW

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Developed by DISA for the DoW

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Executive Summary

The Microsoft Windows Server 2025 Security Technical Implementation Guide (STIG) is published as a tool to improve the security of Department of War (DoW) information systems. The requirements were developed by DoW Consensus as well as Windows security guidance by Microsoft Corporation. This document is meant for use in conjunction with other applicable STIGs, including such topics as Active Directory Domain, Active Directory Forest, and Domain Name Service (DNS).

The Windows Server 2025 STIG includes requirements for both domain controllers and member servers/standalone systems. Requirements specific to domain controllers have “DC” as the second component of the STIG IDs. Requirements specific to member servers have “MS” as the second component of the STIG IDs. All other requirements apply to all systems.

1.2 Authority

Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 8500.01 requires that “all IT [information technology] that receives, processes, stores, displays, or transmits DOD information will be [...] configured [...] consistent with applicable DOD cybersecurity policies, standards, and architectures.” The instruction tasks that DISA “develops and maintains control correlation identifiers (CCIs), security requirements guides (SRGs), security technical implementation guides (STIGs), and mobile code risk categories and usage guides that implement and are consistent with DOD cybersecurity policies, standards, architectures, security controls, and validation procedures, with the support of the NSA/CSS [National Security Agency/Central Security Service], using input from stakeholders, and using automation whenever possible.” This document is provided under the authority of DODI 8500.01.

Although the use of the principles and guidelines in these SRGs/STIGs provides an environment that contributes to the security requirements of DoW systems, applicable NIST SP 800-53 cybersecurity controls must be applied to all systems and architectures based on the Committee on National Security Systems (CNSS) Instruction (CNSSI) 1253.

1.3 Vulnerability Severity Category Code Definitions

Severity Category Codes (referred to as CAT) are a measure of vulnerabilities used to assess a facility or system security posture. Each security policy specified in this document is assigned a Severity Category Code of CAT I, II, or III.

Table 1-1: Vulnerability Severity Category Code Definitions

Category	DISA Category Code Guidelines
CAT I	Any vulnerability, the exploitation of which will directly and immediately result in loss of Confidentiality, Availability, or Integrity.
CAT II	Any vulnerability, the exploitation of which has a potential to result in loss of Confidentiality, Availability, or Integrity.

Category	DISA Category Code Guidelines
CAT III	Any vulnerability, the existence of which degrades measures to protect against loss of Confidentiality, Availability, or Integrity.

1.4 STIG Distribution

Parties within the DoW and federal government's computing environments can obtain the applicable STIG from the DoW Cyber Exchange website at <https://cyber.mil/>. This site contains the latest copies of STIGs, SRGs, and other related security information. Those without a common access card (CAC) that has DoW Certificates can obtain the STIG from <https://public.cyber.mil/>.

1.5 SRG Compliance Reporting

All technical NIST SP 800-53 requirements were considered while developing this STIG. Requirements that are applicable and configurable will be included in the final STIG. A report marked Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) will be available for items that did not meet requirements. This report will be available to component authorizing official (AO) personnel for risk assessment purposes by request via email to: disa.stig_spt@mail.mil.

1.6 Document Revisions

Comments or proposed revisions to this document should be sent via email to the following address: disa.stig_spt@mail.mil. DISA will coordinate all change requests with the relevant DoW organizations before inclusion in this document. Approved changes will be made in accordance with the DISA maintenance release schedule.

1.7 Other Considerations

DISA accepts no liability for the consequences of applying specific configuration settings made on the basis of the SRGs/STIGs. It must be noted that the configuration settings specified should be evaluated in a local, representative test environment before implementation in a production environment, especially within large user populations. The extensive variety of environments makes it impossible to test these configuration settings for all potential software configurations.

For some production environments, failure to test before implementation may lead to a loss of required functionality. Evaluating the risks and benefits to a system's particular circumstances and requirements is the system owner's responsibility. The evaluated risks resulting from not applying specified configuration settings must be approved by the responsible AO. Furthermore, DISA implies no warranty that the application of all specified configurations will make a system 100 percent secure.

Security guidance is provided for the DoW. While other agencies and organizations are free to use it, care must be given to ensure that all applicable security guidance is applied at both the device hardening level and the architectural level due to the fact that some settings may not be configurable in environments outside the DoW architecture.

1.8 Product Approval Disclaimer

STIGs provide configurable operational security guidance for products being used by the DoW. STIGs, along with vendor confidential documentation, also provide a basis for assessing compliance with cybersecurity controls/control enhancements, which supports system assessment and authorization (A&A) under the DoW Risk Management Framework (RMF). DoW AOs may request available vendor confidential documentation for a product that has a STIG for product evaluation and RMF purposes from disa.stig_spt@mail.mil. This documentation is not published for general access to protect the vendor's proprietary information.

AOs have the purview to determine product use/approval in accordance with (IAW) DoW policy and through RMF risk acceptance. Inputs into acquisition or preacquisition product selection include such processes as:

- National Information Assurance Partnership (NIAP) evaluation for National Security Systems (NSS) (<https://www.niap-ccevs.org/>) IAW CNSSP #11.
- National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Cryptographic Module Validation Program (CMVP) (<https://csrc.nist.gov/groups/STM/cmvp/>) IAW federal/DoW mandated standards.

2. ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Security Assessment Information

Additional information is available in the applicable Windows operating system STIG Overview, a summary-level document included with each of the Windows operating system STIGs, available on Cyber Exchange.

2.2 Windows Server 2025 Installation Options

Windows Server 2025 has two main installation options. The server core installation is the default option. This option provides a reduced footprint and attack surface in which the standard graphical user interfaces (GUIs) are not available, with a few exceptions. Interacting with the system when logged on locally is done through a command line environment. Server core installations can also be managed remotely from another system with many of the standard GUIs. Not all server roles are supported in Server core installations.

The Windows Server 2025 (Desktop Experience) installation option provides the standard interfaces for interacting with the system. This may include binaries not specifically required for the system to function and increases the attack surface.

2.3 Group Policy Administrative Template Additions

Some of the requirements in this STIG depend on the use of additional group policy administrative templates that are not included with Windows by default. These administrative template files (.admx and .adml file types) must be copied to the appropriate location in the Windows directory to make the settings they provide visible in group policy tools.

3. GENERAL SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Hardware and Firmware

The virtualization-based security features, including Credential Guard, have specific hardware and firmware requirements.

Unified Extensible Firmware Interface (UEFI) is required to support Secure Boot. Current systems may have UEFI; however, they may have been configured to operate in legacy Basic Input/Output System (BIOS) mode with earlier Windows versions. Changing this will require a complete reinstallation of the operating system instead of an in-place upgrade.

The system Central Processing Unit (CPU) must also support virtualization. Most current CPUs have this capability; however, it may need to be enabled in the firmware. A Trusted Platform Module (TPM) is required to store the keys used by Credential Guard. Credential Guard can function without a TPM, but the keys are stored in a less secure method in software. Windows Server 2025 supports both TPM 2.0 and 1.2.

A Microsoft article on Credential Guard, including system requirement details, can be found at <https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/security/identity-protection/credential-guard/>.

3.2 Virtualization-Based Security Hypervisor Code Integrity

The Windows Virtualization-Based Security (VBS) Device Guard HVCI feature known as Hypervisor Code Integrity (HVCI) may cause major functional issues when running older or noncompliant drivers.

The HVCI service in Windows determines whether code executing in kernel mode is securely designed and trustworthy. It offers zero-day and vulnerability exploit protection capabilities by ensuring that all software running in kernel mode, including drivers, securely allocates memory and operates as intended.

When developing or testing Windows drivers, it is critical that the drivers are HVCI compliant. Hardware drivers must support HVCI if the Device Guard HVCI feature is enabled on the target system. When HVCI is enforced, functional issues have been observed on older and recent hardware running non-HVCI-compliant drivers. The issues are commonly encountered with kernel mode device drivers, such as video adapters, third-party disk encryption software, antivirus/antimalware software, or traditional BIOS or other firmware. The HVCI conflicts range from minor (video resolution issues) to major (boot failures or “blue screen”). Confirm with the hardware vendor that its drivers support HVCI and are tested before implementing the Windows Device Guard HVCI feature.