

National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration

**Headquarters**

Washington, DC 20546-0001



Reply to Attn of:

VS

March 9, 2004

TO: Distribution

FROM: V/Chief Information Officer

SUBJECT: NASA Information Technology (IT) Security Patch Management System

The purpose of this memorandum is to remind Centers of the requirement to deploy a common solution for gathering data on the status of IT security patches.

NASA continues to experience both financial and operational impacts due to worms and viruses. The principal cause of these continued security issues is the lack of current patches on many NASA systems. An additional concern in this area is the difficulty in assessing the Agency's current patch status. NASA must frequently provide data on our system patch levels to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), a process which is time consuming and resource intensive due to the current, decentralized process for collecting data on patch status.

Both OMB and Congress stress the need for agencies to have a unified method for conducting patch management. They understand that NASA has been investigating potential patch management solutions, and they have been waiting for an Agency decision in this area. Based on the results of last year's internal evaluation of patch management products, conducted by KSC with the support of many other Centers, NASA has selected and purchased an Agency license for the PatchLink patch management software.

There are many potential benefits to NASA in the use of the PatchLink system. PatchLink will improve our ability to meet external reporting requirements, provide Centers with a better view of the performance of system administrators, and ensure consistency in the quality and level of information gathered on patch status of individual systems. The use of PatchLink will also facilitate the maintenance of patches on your systems, helping to avoid great impacts from the next big worm or virus.

Last November, all Center CIOs were notified via e-mail of the requirement to use PatchLink for collecting data on the patch status of your Center. All Centers are expected to deploy PatchLink across all systems for which PatchLink has an agent for the operating system in use. The use of PatchLink to perform other patch management activities is highly recommended but not required, since there are some Centers or contracts that are using other solutions. Centers or contractors that choose to use a different patch management product are still required to deploy the PatchLink Client on all systems and to use the PatchLink server to provide monthly reports on the patch status of Center systems.

Every Center must complete full deployment of PatchLink by the end of this fiscal year. In most cases, this will require you to reprioritize funding to meet this aggressive schedule. NASA Headquarters has paid for the Agency PatchLink license and purchased some servers for those Centers that participated in the initial testing. Centers are expected to fund both the deployment of the agents at your Center and any additional servers that your Center may need above those that KSC has provided. It is recommended that, for budget purposes, you factor your anticipated training, agent deployment, and server operations costs into your Center's budget.

Questions regarding this memorandum should be addressed to Scott Santiago, Deputy CIO for IT Security (Acting), at [scott.santiago@nasa.gov](mailto:scott.santiago@nasa.gov).



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