

**Us-Cert Incident Reporting Timelines**

#### **Introduction**

The United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT) plays a crucial role in the nation's cybersecurity framework by providing timely and actionable information to protect against cyber threats. Reporting cyber incidents to US-CERT is essential for national security, enabling a coordinated response to mitigate and prevent further damage. This report outlines the key incident reporting timelines and requirements for organizations to comply with US-CERT guidelines.

#### **1. Reporting Categories and Timelines**

US-CERT categorizes incidents based on their severity and potential impact. Each category has specific reporting timelines to ensure prompt and appropriate responses.

##### **1.1. Category 1: Emergency (Critical Infrastructure)**

* **Definition:** Incidents that pose an immediate threat to critical infrastructure, national security, or public health and safety.
* **Reporting Timeline:** Within 1 hour of detection.
* **Examples:** Large-scale denial of service attacks, significant data breaches affecting critical infrastructure, and malware infections on systems controlling critical operations.

##### **1.2. Category 2: Significant Incident**

* **Definition:** Incidents that have a significant impact on an organization's operations or pose a substantial threat to national security or public confidence.
* **Reporting Timeline:** Within 2 hours of detection.
* **Examples:** Targeted cyberattacks on major financial institutions, widespread ransomware attacks, and breaches involving sensitive government data.

##### **1.3. Category 3: Moderate Incident**

* **Definition:** Incidents that have a moderate impact on an organization's operations but do not pose an immediate threat to national security or critical infrastructure.
* **Reporting Timeline:** Within 4 hours of detection.
* **Examples:** Unauthorized access to non-critical systems, phishing campaigns that do not result in significant data loss, and malware infections on non-critical systems.

##### **1.4. Category 4: Minor Incident**

* **Definition:** Incidents that have a minor impact on an organization's operations and do not pose a threat to national security or critical infrastructure.
* **Reporting Timeline:** Within 24 hours of detection.
* **Examples:** Low-level malware infections, unsuccessful phishing attempts, and minor data breaches involving non-sensitive information.

##### **1.5. Category 5: Ongoing Malicious Activity**

* **Definition:** Incidents involving ongoing malicious activity that has not yet caused significant damage but could escalate if not addressed.
* **Reporting Timeline:** Within 1 hour of detection.
* **Examples:** Detection of advanced persistent threats (APTs) or indicators of compromise (IOCs) suggesting a potential larger attack.

#### **2. Reporting Process**

##### **2.1. Initial Notification**

* **Content:** Initial reports should include basic information about the incident, such as the type of incident, affected systems, and initial assessment of impact.
* **Method:** Submit the report through US-CERT's online reporting portal, email, or phone.

##### **2.2. Follow-Up Reports**

* **Content:** Provide detailed information as it becomes available, including root cause analysis, mitigation actions taken, and any further impact assessment.
* **Frequency:** Continuous updates should be provided as new information is discovered and the situation evolves.

#### **3. Legal and Regulatory Compliance**

* **Federal Agencies:** Must comply with the Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA) reporting requirements and coordinate with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other relevant agencies.
* **Private Sector:** While reporting is generally voluntary, compliance with US-CERT guidelines can enhance an organization's cybersecurity posture and support national security efforts.

#### **4. Best Practices**

* **Preparedness:** Develop and maintain an incident response plan that includes procedures for reporting to US-CERT.
* **Training:** Regularly train employees on recognizing and reporting cyber incidents.
* **Communication:** Establish clear lines of communication with US-CERT and other relevant authorities to facilitate timely reporting and response.

#### **Conclusion**

Timely and accurate reporting of cyber incidents to US-CERT is vital for national cybersecurity. Adhering to the established timelines and processes ensures a coordinated response, minimizing the impact of cyber threats and enhancing the overall security posture of organizations and the nation.