

Origin of the name and logo of Meltdown and Specter - Melting and Ghosts

This article will only answer one question: Why are they named so?

This article is in the series: Overview of vulnerabilities on Intel, AMD, ARM chips: Meltdown and Specter. Please read all the articles in the series to get information as well as take steps to protect your device against these two serious security holes.

Meltdown and Specter are the two major microprocessor-impact vulnerabilities that were discovered on January 3. If you want to know about the severity or solutions to protect your computer against these two vulnerabilities, read the other articles in the series. This article will only answer one question: Why are they named so?

The name speaks of personality

According to Michael Schwarz, a member of the first group who discovered and reported on Meltdown, the name was thought by Daniel Gruss, his colleague.

'One morning, he came to the office and told me (Mortiz Lipp) and I called it Meltdown,' Schwarz said. 'We like that name for many reasons,' and it comes from the nature of this vulnerability.

"This error will essentially 'melt the boundary between software and operating systems," Schwarz explained. 'Nuclear melting often comes with some form of leakage. This gap is also very serious, has a great effect, like melting in a nuclear reactor.'



Schwarz also said that the name Meltdown is derived from the German language. 'In German, it is written as 'Kernschmelze' which means 'core burning'. We also call the CPU core (CPU Kern) so this is a pun, referring to the CPU is not working properly.

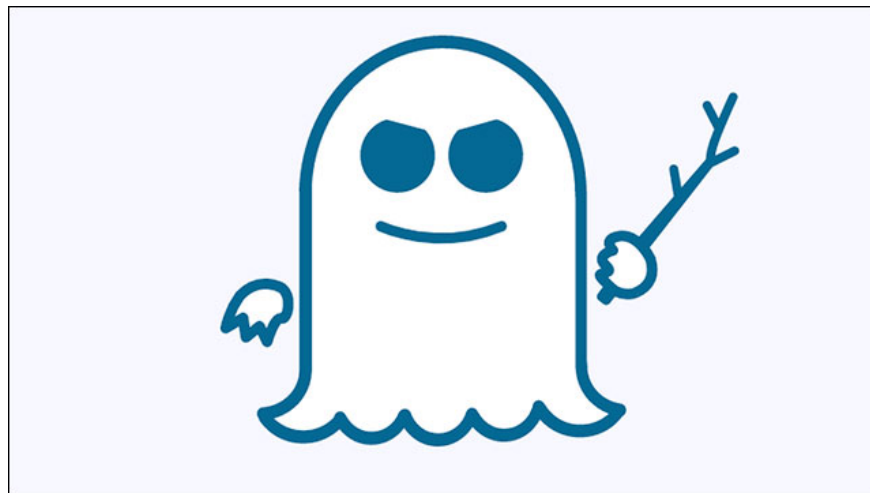
Specter also has similar origins

According to Paul Kocher, who has worked with five other researchers to discover this error, the idea of ??a ghost keeps hanging around in his head.

'I chose Specter name for 2 reasons - this word is quite similar to 'speculative' (meaning suspicion, guessing is also discovered by speculation execution) and the literal meaning of this word is 'ghost'. Normal programs will not see the modes of speculation.'

Logo origin of Meltdown and Specter

'With Meltdown, the idea is that something is melting, such as walls, barriers, forbidden signs.', he said, 'and Specter must have a ghost image. I don't know who thought the idea of ??a ghost holding a tree, I think Moritz. We have 3, 4 logo options before choosing the last one we like the most.'



Specter ghosts can still frighten us for years

Werner Haas worked with Thomas Prescher and discovered Meltdown before joining the group with other researchers. He said that when two people work they use another name and logo. 'Thomas and I use a different name, and since we're not good at design, we have a big picture online.'

But that doesn't mean he doesn't like it. Looking at the logo draft, Haas said that 'looks pretty good so we quickly decided it didn't take much time for this.'

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