

# Misinterpreting the misleadingly-named `STATUS_STACK_BUFFER_OVERRUN`

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I noted some time ago that `STATUS_STACK_BUFFER_OVERRUN` doesn't mean that there was a stack buffer overrun, although that's what it meant at first. Later, the status code was broadened to mean "Program self-triggered abnormal termination", but it was too late to change the name.

A security vulnerability report came in that went like this:

I have found a stack overflow bug in Explorer. This stack overflow occurs in ucrtbase.dll and Windows.UI.FileExplorer.dll. Since it occurs in Explorer, this can be exploited to escalate privileges. To reproduce, download the attached ZIP file and right-click it. I have also attached Explorer crash dumps for analysis.

```
EXCEPTION_RECORD: (.exr -1)
ExceptionAddress: 00007ffcaa19dd7e (ucrtbase!abort+0x000000000000004e)
ExceptionCode: c0000409 (Security check failure or stack buffer overrun)
ExceptionFlags: 00000001
NumberParameters: 1
Parameter[0]: 0000000000000007
Subcode: 0x7 FAST_FAIL_FATAL_APP_EXIT
```

```
STACK_TEXT:
ucrtbase!abort+0x4e
ucrtbase!terminate+0x29
ucrtbase!__crt_state_management::wrapped_invoke<void (__cdecl*)(void)
noexcept,void>+0xf
explorer!_sCRT_unhandled_exception_filter+0x5a
KERNELBASE!UnhandledExceptionFilter+0x1f1
ntdll!LdrpLogFatalUserCallbackException+0xa2
ntdll!KiUserCallbackDispatcherHandler+0x20
ntdll!RtlpExecuteHandlerForException+0xf
ntdll!RtlDispatchException+0x25a
ntdll!RtlRaiseException+0x163
KERNELBASE!RaiseException+0x6c
msvcr90!_CxxThrowException+0x86
contoso+0x104d
contososhellext!OnInvokeCommand+0x548
contososhellext!OnInvokeCommand+0x24d2a
contososhellext!OnGetCommandString+0x4f
contoso+0x2abd
contoso+0x27f0
shell32!CDefFolderMenu::GetCommandString+0x1f6
shell32!CDefFolderMenu::_UnduplicateVerbs+0x31f
shell32!CDefFolderMenu::QueryContextMenu+0x7d2
shell32!CDefView::_DoContextMenuPopup+0x2f7
shell32!CDefView::OnSelectionContextMenu+0x85
explorerframe!UIItemsView::ShowContextMenu+0x378
explorerframe!CItemsView::ShowContextMenu+0x17
shell32!CDefView::_DoContextMenu+0x92
shell32!CDefView::_OnContextMenu+0xec
shell32!CDefView::WndProc+0x718
shell32!CDefView::s_WndProc+0x5c
user32!UserCallWinProcCheckWow+0x33c
user32!CallWindowProcW+0x8e
```

From the exception record, we see that this was a fast-fail: **FAST\_FAIL\_FATAL\_APP\_EXIT**.

From the stack trace we can see that this was due to an unhandled C++ exception thrown by Contoso: Contoso called `_CxxThrowException`, and this ended up reaching the `_scrt_unhandled_exception_filter`, which decided to `terminate` the process.

The problem is therefore with the Contoso shell extension: When you right-click this file, the Contoso shell extension throws a C++ exception which it does not handle.

C++ exceptions cannot be thrown across the ABI boundary because there's no requirement in the ABI that the calling code even be written in C++ at all!<sup>1</sup> And certainly unhandled C++ exceptions are really bad ideas.

There is a bug here, but the bug is in the Contoso shell extension, not in Explorer. Such is the punishment for allowing third party extensibility: Any bug in a third party extension manifests itself as a bug in Explorer.

<sup>1</sup> For example, the Windows 95 shell was written in C.