SP Page Builder Zero Day Is Being Used to Plant Fake Joomla Admins

An unauthenticated file upload in SP Page Builder gives attackers remote code execution on Joomla sites and is being used to create hidden Super User accounts. It is fixed in 6.6.2. Update now and check for rogue admins.

Phil E. Taylor | 15 June 2026

JCE Profiles Hack (15th June): Attackers are actively targeting Joomla sites that run JCE. Track down the rogue profiles and webshells they leave behind, on every site you manage.

Read the alert >

There is a particular kind of hacked Joomla site that looks completely fine until you open the user list and find Super Administrators nobody created, with plausible-sounding names like “Web Editor” or “Admin Backup” and email addresses at `@secure.local`. We have been seeing those accounts turn up across Joomla sites this month, and we traced them back to a single cause: a zero day in SP Page Builder, the popular page builder by JoomShaper.

The flaw lets anyone, with no login at all, upload a PHP web shell through one of the component’s own endpoints and then run it. That is remote code execution: full control to steal data, deface pages, plant backdoors, or use the server to attack other sites. The attacker’s payload uses that control to create the hidden Super User, so even after the entry point is closed they still have a way back in. It affects every version up to and including 6.6.1, and it is already being exploited in the wild.

The patch is SP Page Builder 6.6.2. If you run any Joomla site with SP Page Builder installed, update it now, then read on for what the bug does, how to spot the hidden admin, and how to check the rest of your sites in one place.

TL;DR

- **Unauthenticated file upload to remote code execution** in SP Page Builder, through the `asset.uploadCustomIcon` task. No login required
- Affects **every version up to and including 6.6.1**. Fixed in **6.6.2**
- **Already exploited in the wild.** The payload plants a hidden Super Administrator account, usually with an `@secure.local` email, plus a PHP file manager backdoor in several spots for persistence

- This is a **different vector from the recent JCE wave**. A WAF that returns 403 for the JCE exploit paths may still let this one through with a 200
- **Update to 6.6.2 on every affected site, then check for rogue Super Users and clean any site that was hit.** Unpublishing the component does not protect you

> This is being actively exploited right now. The fix exists, and the technical detail is going public, which means more scanners will know exactly what to look for. The sites that get caught are the ones still on an old version when that happens. Update to 6.6.2 before you do anything else, then check whether you were already hit.

Find Sites With Rogue Super Admins, Across Every Joomla Site, in mySites.guru

When a zero day plants a hidden admin account, the dangerous part is not the one site you already found. It is the other forty you have not checked yet. Logging into every Joomla admin and reading the user list one site at a time is exactly the job nobody finishes before the attacker comes back.

We built a dedicated check for this. mySites.guru now has a **Rogue Super Admin Accounts tool** that looks for the signature of this compromise: Super Administrator accounts carrying the attacker's `@secure.local` email domain. It runs across every connected Joomla site and lists the sites that have one, so you find all of them in seconds instead of discovering them one nasty surprise at a time. When it finds a rogue admin, you can delete it straight from the dashboard, then move on to cleaning the rest of the site.

To find which of your sites even run SP Page Builder in the first place, mySites.guru records the exact version of every installed extension across every connected Joomla site on a twice-daily snapshot. The extension search shows you every site running SP Page Builder, grouped by version. Filter for anything below 6.6.2 and you have your

patch list. Combined with the mass extension updater, you can push 6.6.2 across every affected site in one batch.

If you do not have a mySites.guru account yet, start a free trial and connect your sites. The extension index and the rogue admin check both run automatically on the first snapshot, so you will know straight away which sites are exposed and which are already compromised.

What the Bug Actually Did

SP Page Builder exposes a controller task named `asset.uploadCustomIcon`, reached through a normal Joomla request:

```
index.php?option=com_sppagebuilder&task=asset.uploadCustomIcon
```

That task is meant to handle a small administrative job, uploading a custom icon. The problem is that it processed the uploaded file with no authentication check and no server-side restriction on the file type, then wrote it to a folder under the web root. Joomla ships helpers that validate uploads against an allow-list of safe extensions, and this path did not use them. So an attacker could upload a `.php` file, browse to it, and the server would execute it. That is the whole chain, and it is as bad as web vulnerabilities get.

Because the task required no login, the attack worked against a completely default install. There was nothing to enable, no guest setting to toggle, no SP Page Builder page that needed to be published. The endpoint was reachable on any Joomla site with the component installed.

> We are deliberately not publishing a working exploit. The mechanism above is enough to understand the risk and confirm your sites are patched. It is not a recipe. The fix is out, so the right response to this post is to update and check your admins, not to test it on someone else's site.

What the Attacker Leaves Behind

This is the part that makes the SP Page Builder zero day worse than a smash-and-grab. The attacker does not just get one-time code execution and move on. The payload uses that access to set up a quiet, durable foothold.

First, it creates **hidden Super Administrator accounts**. We have seen sites with several at once, carrying forgettable usernames like `webeditor48`, `sitehelper7` and `adminbk`, and reassuring display names like “Web Editor”, “Site Helper” and “Admin Backup”. The group is always Super Users, and the email address always ends in `@secure.local`. That email domain is the giveaway. It is not a real domain, and no legitimate Joomla account uses it. If you see even one Super User with an `@secure.local` address, that site has been compromised through this exploit.

Second, it drops a **PHP file manager backdoor**. This is a full-featured admin panel, branded internally as “PHP File manager ver 1.4”, with file browsing, a built-in PHP console, and a SQL console. The attacker plants several identical copies of it in innocuous-looking places, typically a `.php` file under `images/<random>/fonts/`, and stray copies named `users.php` in folders like `/media/com_admin/` and `/media/regularlabs/`. The point of scattering identical copies is persistence: if you find one and delete it, the others are still there, and they all let the attacker straight back in.

One operational note if you are reading your logs. Joomla writes the user account’s creation timestamp in the site’s own timezone, taken from `configuration.php`, not in UTC. Your web server access logs are usually in UTC. So a rogue admin that looks like it was created at, say, 19:20 in the user table can correspond to an upload at 02:20 the next morning in the access log. Convert before you go looking, or you will search the wrong window and conclude, wrongly, that the log is clean.

A WAF That Stops the JCE Hack Might Not Stop This

If you have been keeping up with Joomla security this year, you have already deployed WAF rules for the JCE editor file upload. It is tempting to assume those rules cover this

too. They often do not.

This is a separate vector with a separate request signature. We have watched WAF configurations, including ones tuned specifically for the JCE wave, correctly return a 403 for the `com_jce` exploit paths while letting the SP Page Builder `asset.uploadCustomIcon` request sail through with a 200. The rule was written for the last attack, not this one. That is the trap with signature-based blocking: it protects you against exactly the thing it was told about and nothing else.

If you cannot update to 6.6.2 immediately, a web server rule that blocks requests carrying the `asset.uploadCustomIcon` task will buy you time. One thing to watch: the dot in the task name can be sent URL-encoded as `%2e`, and a naive rule that only matches a literal dot will miss it. The rule has to account for the encoded form too. But a blocking rule is a stopgap. The real fix is the update.

Update to 6.6.2, Then Hunt the Admin

The fix is SP Page Builder 6.6.2. Updating to it closes the upload hole. You have three ways to do it:

- **Joomla admin:** update SP Page Builder the normal way through the Joomla updater
- **mySites.guru dashboard:** push the update across several sites at once without logging into each one
- **Direct download:** grab 6.6.2 from joomshaper.com and install it over the top

The one thing that matters is that you land on 6.6.2 or later. If you took emergency action before updating and renamed or removed the component, reinstall it from a clean 6.6.2 download rather than putting the old files back, otherwise you are restoring the vulnerable version.

But updating only stops the next attempt. Because this was being actively exploited and the payload plants a hidden admin, you have to assume some sites were hit and check every one.

Updating Closes the Door. The Hidden Admin Is Already Inside

This is the step people skip, and on this vulnerability it is the one that matters most. A patched site with a rogue Super User on it is still fully compromised. The attacker does not need the upload bug any more, they have a Super Administrator login.

For every site that had SP Page Builder below 6.6.2:

- **Check the user list for accounts you did not create.** The clear signal is a Super Administrator with an `@secure.local` email. mySites.guru's Rogue Super Admin check does this across all your Joomla sites at once, lists every flagged account so you can see exactly who will be removed, and deletes them all with one click. Deletion is permanent and there is no backup, so note anything you want for evidence first
- **Do not treat a clean result as all-clear.** If the check finds no `@secure.local` admins, that only rules out this specific account signature. The site can still be hacked, so run a full audit and the Suspect Content scan anyway
- **Look for the dropped webshell.** Search for unexpected `.php` files under `images/<random>/fonts/`, and for stray files named `users.php` in folders like `/media/com_admin/` and `/media/regularlabs/`. The file contents will mention a "PHP File manager". Multiple identical copies is normal for this attack, so do not stop at the first one
- **Run a full scan.** mySites.guru runs a file scanner on every snapshot, twice a day, on every connected Joomla site, and flags known web shell signatures and files that do not belong. Open each affected site in the dashboard and check its **Hacked?** section

If you find anything, treat that site as compromised and clean it properly: remove the rogue admin and every backdoor copy, rotate your Joomla passwords, database credentials and FTP/SSH keys, force-logout all sessions, and audit the whole site rather than just the SP Page Builder folder. Someone who got in through one component will

usually leave a second way back in somewhere you would not think to look. Finding one mess is a reason to check the whole house.

This Keeps Happening to Joomla Components

SP Page Builder is not an outlier. It joins a steady run of third-party Joomla component vulnerabilities we have written up this year, several with the same shape: an endpoint that should have been locked down, reachable without authentication, doing something dangerous. The iCagenda zero day was another unauthenticated file upload, found the same week as this one. The Astroid framework backdoor and the Novarain framework RCE were both unauthenticated code execution in widely-installed extensions. The vulnerable JCE editor was another file upload. The underlying pattern, where an AJAX or form endpoint skips its authorization check, is one of the most common ways Joomla sites get hacked through no fault of the site owner.

The lesson is not "stop using extensions". Extensions are what make Joomla useful, and SP Page Builder is genuinely good at its job. The lesson is that the security of your sites depends on code other people wrote, shipped on their own schedule, and the day a flaw like this becomes public you need to know, within minutes, which of your sites run it, patch them all at once, and check whether any were already turned into an attacker's beachhead. That is the entire reason mySites.guru indexes every extension on every site you connect and ships a specific check the moment a specific attack like this one appears. When the next one drops, and there will be a next one, you want to be the operator who patched and swept before the scanner came back, not the one finding an `@secure.local` admin three weeks later.

Further Reading

- SP Page Builder by JoomShaper
- Joomla Vulnerable Extensions List
- OWASP: Unrestricted File Upload
- Joomla security best practices

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the SP Page Builder vulnerability?

An unauthenticated arbitrary file upload that leads to remote code execution. SP Page Builder exposes a task, asset.uploadCustomIcon, that accepts a file with no login and no check on the file type, so an attacker can upload a PHP web shell to a web-served folder and run it. That gives full control of the site. It affects every version up to and including 6.6.1 and is fixed in 6.6.2.

Which SP Page Builder versions are affected?

Every version up to and including 6.6.1. The fix ships in 6.6.2. Anything below 6.6.2 should be treated as vulnerable and updated immediately. SP Page Builder is one of the most widely installed Joomla extensions, so the exposure is large.

Was this being exploited in the wild?

Yes. We traced live attacks in real Joomla access logs: a POST to index.php?option=com_sppagebuilder&task=asset.uploadCustomIcon returning 200, followed by a GET to the planted PHP file, followed by a brand new Super User account appearing in the site. This is active exploitation, not a theoretical finding, which is why we treated it as a zero day.

How do I know if one of my Joomla sites was already hacked?

Look for Super Administrator accounts you did not create, especially ones with an email address ending in @secure.local. Sites are often hit with several at once, using innocent-looking names like Web Editor or Admin Backup. Also look for unexpected .php files under images/<random>/fonts/, and for files called users.php carrying a 'PHP File manager ver 1.4' signature in places like /media/com_admin/. mySites.guru has a dedicated Rogue Super Admin check that finds the @secure.local accounts across every connected Joomla site automatically and removes them in one click. A clean result rules out only this account signature, not every hack, so run a full audit too.

How do I fix it?

Update SP Page Builder to 6.6.2 or later on every site that runs it. You can update through the Joomla admin, push the update across many sites at once from your mySites.guru dashboard, or download 6.6.2 from joomshaper.com and install it over the top. Updating

closes the door, but it does not remove an attacker who is already inside, so also delete any rogue Super Users and clean each compromised site.

A WAF blocks the JCE exploits, am I protected from this one too?

Not necessarily. This is a different vector from the JCE editor wave. We have seen WAF rules that correctly return 403 for the com_jce exploit paths still let the SP Page Builder asset.uploadCustomIcon request through with a 200. The reliable fix is to update to 6.6.2. If you cannot update immediately, a web server rule that blocks the asset.uploadCustomIcon task buys you time, but watch for the dot in the task name being URL-encoded as %2e to slip past a naive rule.

Does unpublishing SP Page Builder protect the site?

No. The upload task is reachable through the component's controller whether or not any SP Page Builder page is published, and any files already uploaded stay both writable and web-served. Until you update to 6.6.2 the only reliable stop short of patching is a web server rule that blocks the asset.uploadCustomIcon request, or renaming the com_sppagebuilder folders so Joomla cannot route to them. Now that 6.6.2 is out, just update.

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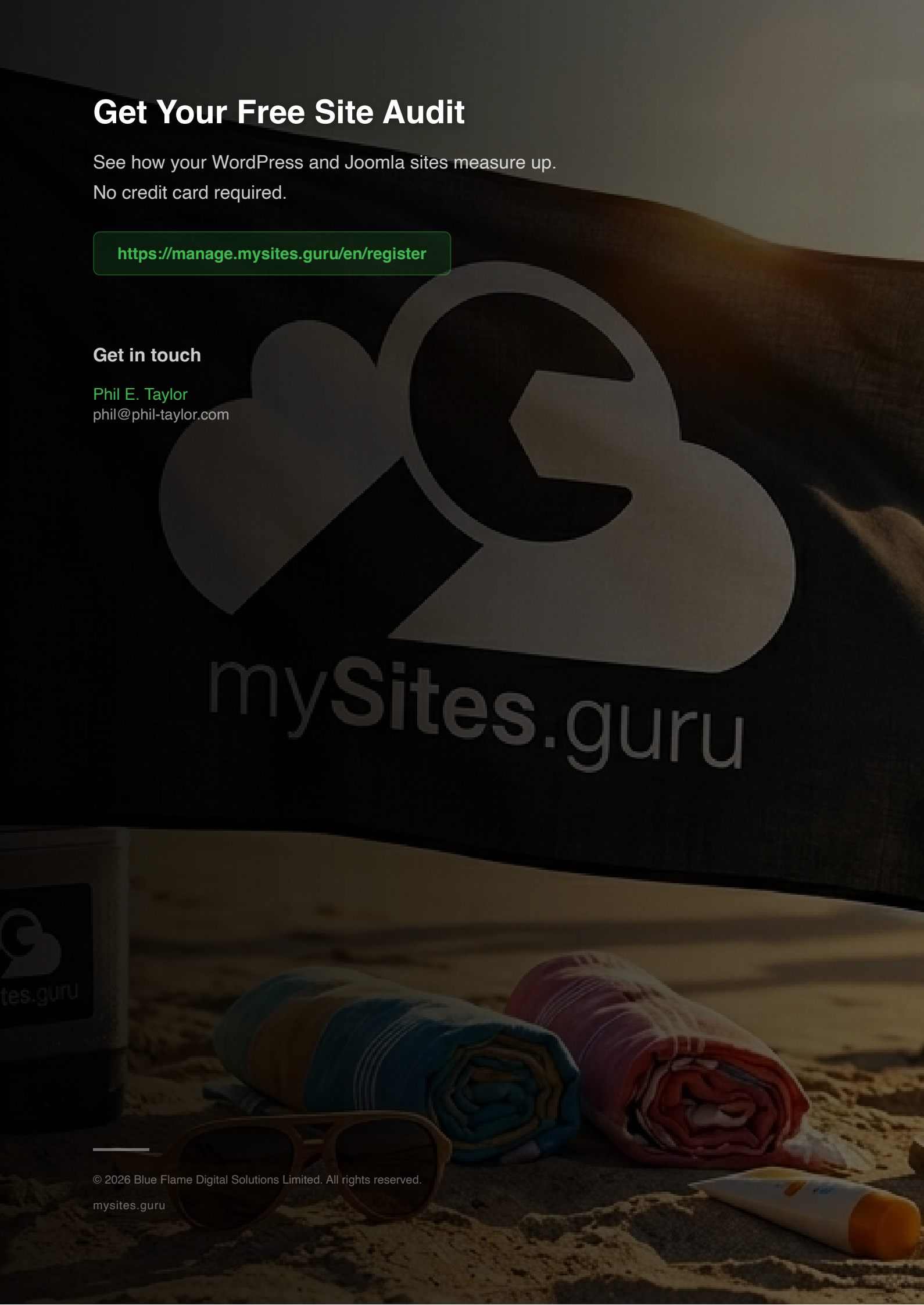

Get in touch

Phil E. Taylor
phil@phil-taylor.com