

Fix IIS Server ApplicationHost.config file error

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Issue: When IIS Server is reporting the applicationHost.config file is missing or corrupted

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Resolution:

Locate IIS History Backups

IIS automatically stores previous versions of applicationHost.config in the history directory.

Navigate to: **C:\inetpub\history**

- Open **File Explorer**
- Browse into **C:\inetpub\history**
- You will see folders named **CFGHISTORY_000000xxxx**
- Open the most recent folder (highest number)

Identify a Valid applicationHost.config

You need to confirm the backup file is intact before restoring it.

- Inside the history folder, locate **applicationHost.config**
- Ensure the file is **not 0 bytes**
- Right-click → **Open with Notepad** to verify it contains XML

Stop IIS Before Restoring

Stopping IIS prevents it from rewriting or locking the config during restoration.

Run: **iisreset /stop**

- Open **Command Prompt** as Administrator
- Type **iisreset /stop**
- Wait for confirmation that IIS services have stopped

Copy the Backup File to the IIS Config Directory

Replace the corrupted or missing config with the known-good backup.

Destination: **C:\Windows\System32\inetsrv\config**

- Copy the backup **applicationHost.config**
- Paste it into **C:\Windows\System32\inetsrv\config**
- Approve overwrite when prompted
- Ensure file size matches the backup (not 0 bytes)

Restart IIS Services

Once the restored file is in place, IIS can load the configuration normally.

Run: **iisreset /start**

- Return to the Administrator Command Prompt
- Type **iisreset /start**
- Wait for confirmation that IIS services have started

Verify Sites and Application Pools

Confirm IIS is functioning correctly after the restore.

- Open **IIS Manager**
 - Check that **Application Pools** are started
 - Confirm your **Sites** load without configuration errors
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