

Incident Postmortem: Checkout Latency

A blameless operational review with impact, timeline, causal analysis, and owned actions.

Incident ID	INC-2026-0718
Severity	SEV-2
Owner	Priya Nair
Window	2026-07-18 14:07-15:02 UTC
Affected service	Checkout API - eu-west
Status	Resolved; follow-up actions in progress

Executive summary

A connection-pool limit introduced during a routine database proxy rollout caused elevated checkout latency in eu-west. Requests queued behind exhausted connections, and the retry policy amplified load. The team rolled back the proxy configuration and restored normal latency within 55 minutes.

This review is blameless: the failure emerged from interacting safeguards, incomplete load-test coverage, and an alert that measured errors but not queue time.

Customer impact

- 8.7% of checkout requests exceeded five seconds.
- 2.1% of checkout attempts returned a timeout before payment authorisation.
- No duplicate charges, data loss, or security exposure occurred.
- Support received 43 related contacts; all affected carts remained recoverable.

Timeline

UTC	Event	Owner
14:07	Database proxy configuration deployed to eu-west.	Release bot
14:14	P95 checkout latency crossed the service objective.	Monitoring
14:19	Support linked three timeout reports and paged on-call.	N. Brooks
14:26	Incident declared SEV-2; change freeze started.	P. Nair
14:38	Connection saturation identified in proxy metrics.	D. Okafor
14:46	Rollback approved and initiated.	P. Nair
14:54	Queue depth and P95 latency returned to baseline.	Monitoring
15:02	Recovery verified; incident moved to monitoring.	S. Rossi

Root cause and contributing factors

Root cause: The proxy pool was capped below the application's steady-state concurrent connection demand.

Amplifier: Retries used fixed intervals, aligning repeated requests and increasing queue pressure.

Detection gap: The page fired on error rate, while the first visible symptom was rising queue time and latency.

Test gap: Staging load tests used average traffic and did not reproduce the regional peak-concurrency profile.

Corrective actions

Action	Owner	Due	Priority	Status
Set pool limits from measured regional concurrency with 30% headroom.	D. Okafor	2026-07-22	P0	Done
Add queue-depth and checkout-latency burn-rate alerts.	S. Rossi	2026-07-24	P0	In progress
Replace fixed retries with jittered exponential backoff.	T. Baxter	2026-07-29	P1	In progress
Add peak-concurrency profile to pre-production load tests.	A. Bello	2026-08-02	P1	Planned
Document rollback ownership in the service runbook.	P. Nair	2026-07-25	P2	Planned

What went well

- Support reports were quickly correlated with telemetry.
- The change was reversible and rollback completed in eight minutes.
- Payment idempotency controls prevented duplicate authorisations.

Fictional operational sample. Adapt severity definitions, owners, and retention rules to your organisation.