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Internet Engineering Task Force
R. Braden, Editor
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Requirements for Internet Hosts -- Communication Layers

Status of This Memo

This RFC is an official specification for the Internet community. It incorporates by reference, amends, corrects, and supplements the primary protocol standards documents relating to hosts. Distribution of this document is unlimited.

Summary

This is one RFC of a pair that defines and discusses the requirements for Internet host software. This RFC covers the communications protocol layers: link layer, IP layer, and transport layer; its companion RFC-1123 covers the application and support protocols.

Table of Contents

- 1. INTRODUCTION 5
 - 1.1 The Internet Architecture 6
 - 1.1.1 Internet Hosts 6
 - 1.1.2 Architectural Assumptions 7
 - 1.1.3 Internet Protocol Suite 8
 - 1.1.4 Embedded Gateway Code 10
 - 1.2 General Considerations 12
 - 1.2.1 Continuing Internet Evolution 12
 - 1.2.2 Robustness Principle 12
 - 1.2.3 Error Logging 13
 - 1.2.4 Configuration 14
 - 1.3 Reading this Document 15
 - 1.3.1 Organization 15
 - 1.3.2 Requirements 16
 - 1.3.3 Terminology 17
 - 1.4 Acknowledgments 20
- 2. LINK LAYER 21
 - 2.1 INTRODUCTION 21

2.2	PROTOCOL WALK-THROUGH	21
2.3	SPECIFIC ISSUES	21
2.3.1	Trailer Protocol Negotiation	21
2.3.2	Address Resolution Protocol -- ARP	22
2.3.2.1	ARP Cache Validation	22
2.3.2.2	ARP Packet Queue	24
2.3.3	Ethernet and IEEE 802 Encapsulation	24
2.4	LINK/INTERNET LAYER INTERFACE	25
2.5	LINK LAYER REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY	26
3.	INTERNET LAYER PROTOCOLS	27
3.1	INTRODUCTION	27
3.2	PROTOCOL WALK-THROUGH	29
3.2.1	Internet Protocol -- IP	29
3.2.1.1	Version Number	29
3.2.1.2	Checksum	29
3.2.1.3	Addressing	29
3.2.1.4	Fragmentation and Reassembly	32
3.2.1.5	Identification	32
3.2.1.6	Type-of-Service	33
3.2.1.7	Time-to-Live	34
3.2.1.8	Options	35
3.2.2	Internet Control Message Protocol -- ICMP	38
3.2.2.1	Destination Unreachable	39
3.2.2.2	Redirect	40
3.2.2.3	Source Quench	41
3.2.2.4	Time Exceeded	41
3.2.2.5	Parameter Problem	42
3.2.2.6	Echo Request/Reply	42
3.2.2.7	Information Request/Reply	43
3.2.2.8	Timestamp and Timestamp Reply	43
3.2.2.9	Address Mask Request/Reply	45
3.2.3	Internet Group Management Protocol IGMP	47
3.3	SPECIFIC ISSUES	47
3.3.1	Routing Outbound Datagrams	47
3.3.1.1	Local/Remote Decision	47
3.3.1.2	Gateway Selection	48
3.3.1.3	Route Cache	49
3.3.1.4	Dead Gateway Detection	51
3.3.1.5	New Gateway Selection	55
3.3.1.6	Initialization	56
3.3.2	Reassembly	56
3.3.3	Fragmentation	58
3.3.4	Local Multihoming	60
3.3.4.1	Introduction	60
3.3.4.2	Multihoming Requirements	61
3.3.4.3	Choosing a Source Address	64
3.3.5	Source Route Forwarding	65

3.3.6	Broadcasts	66
3.3.7	IP Multicasting	67
3.3.8	Error Reporting	69
3.4	INTERNET/TRANSPORT LAYER INTERFACE	69
3.5	INTERNET LAYER REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY	72
4.	TRANSPORT PROTOCOLS	77
4.1	USER DATAGRAM PROTOCOL -- UDP	77
4.1.1	INTRODUCTION	77
4.1.2	PROTOCOL WALK-THROUGH	77
4.1.3	SPECIFIC ISSUES	77
4.1.3.1	Ports	77
4.1.3.2	IP Options	77
4.1.3.3	ICMP Messages	78
4.1.3.4	UDP Checksums	78
4.1.3.5	UDP Multihoming	79
4.1.3.6	Invalid Addresses	79
4.1.4	UDP/APPLICATION LAYER INTERFACE	79
4.1.5	UDP REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY	80
4.2	TRANSMISSION CONTROL PROTOCOL -- TCP	82
4.2.1	INTRODUCTION	82
4.2.2	PROTOCOL WALK-THROUGH	82
4.2.2.1	Well-Known Ports	82
4.2.2.2	Use of Push	82
4.2.2.3	Window Size	83
4.2.2.4	Urgent Pointer	84
4.2.2.5	TCP Options	85
4.2.2.6	Maximum Segment Size Option	85
4.2.2.7	TCP Checksum	86
4.2.2.8	TCP Connection State Diagram	86
4.2.2.9	Initial Sequence Number Selection	87
4.2.2.10	Simultaneous Open Attempts	87
4.2.2.11	Recovery from Old Duplicate SYN	87
4.2.2.12	RST Segment	87
4.2.2.13	Closing a Connection	87
4.2.2.14	Data Communication	89
4.2.2.15	Retransmission Timeout	90
4.2.2.16	Managing the Window	91
4.2.2.17	Probing Zero Windows	92
4.2.2.18	Passive OPEN Calls	92
4.2.2.19	Time to Live	93
4.2.2.20	Event Processing	93
4.2.2.21	Acknowledging Queued Segments	94
4.2.3	SPECIFIC ISSUES	95
4.2.3.1	Retransmission Timeout Calculation	95
4.2.3.2	When to Send an ACK Segment	96
4.2.3.3	When to Send a Window Update	97
4.2.3.4	When to Send Data	98

RFC1122

INTRODUCTION

October 1989

- 4.2.3.5 TCP Connection Failures 100
- 4.2.3.6 TCP Keep-Alives 101
- 4.2.3.7 TCP Multihoming 103
- 4.2.3.8 IP Options 103
- 4.2.3.9 ICMP Messages 103
- 4.2.3.10 Remote Address Validation 104
- 4.2.3.11 TCP Traffic Patterns 104
- 4.2.3.12 Efficiency 105
- 4.2.4 TCP/APPLICATION LAYER INTERFACE 106
 - 4.2.4.1 Asynchronous Reports 106
 - 4.2.4.2 Type-of-Service 107
 - 4.2.4.3 Flush Call 107
 - 4.2.4.4 Multihoming 108
- 4.2.5 TCP REQUIREMENT SUMMARY 108

- 5. REFERENCES 112

RFC1122

INTRODUCTION

October 1989

1. INTRODUCTION

This document is one of a pair that defines and discusses the requirements for host system implementations of the Internet protocol suite. This RFC covers the communication protocol layers: link layer, IP layer, and transport layer. Its companion RFC, "Requirements for Internet Hosts -- Application and Support" [INTRO:1], covers the application layer protocols. This document should also be read in conjunction with "Requirements for Internet Gateways" [INTRO:2].

These documents are intended to provide guidance for vendors, implementors, and users of Internet communication software. They represent the consensus of a large body of technical experience and wisdom, contributed by the members of the Internet research and vendor communities.

This RFC enumerates standard protocols that a host connected to the Internet must use, and it incorporates by reference the RFCs and other documents describing the current specifications for these protocols. It corrects errors in the referenced documents and adds additional discussion and guidance for an implementor.

For each protocol, this document also contains an explicit set of requirements, recommendations, and options. The reader must understand that the list of requirements in this document is incomplete by itself; the complete set of requirements for an Internet host is primarily defined in the standard protocol specification documents, with the corrections, amendments, and supplements contained in this RFC.

A good-faith implementation of the protocols that was produced after careful reading of the RFC's and with some interaction with the Internet technical community, and that followed good communications software engineering practices, should differ from the requirements of this document in only minor ways. Thus, in many cases, the "requirements" in this RFC are already stated or implied in the standard protocol documents, so that their inclusion here is, in a sense, redundant. However, they were included because some past implementation has made the wrong choice, causing problems of interoperability, performance, and/or robustness.

This document includes discussion and explanation of many of the requirements and recommendations. A simple list of requirements would be dangerous, because:

- o Some required features are more important than others, and some features are optional.

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