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Internet Protocol Version 6 (IPv6) Addressing Architecture

Status of this Memo

This document specifies an Internet standards track protocol for the Internet community, and requests discussion and suggestions for improvements. Please refer to the current edition of the "Internet Official Protocol Standards" (STD 1) for the standardization state and status of this protocol. Distribution of this memo is unlimited.

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Abstract

This specification defines the addressing architecture of the IP Version 6 (IPv6) protocol. The document includes the IPv6 addressing model, text representations of IPv6 addresses, definition of IPv6 unicast addresses, anycast addresses, and multicast addresses, and an IPv6 node's required addresses.

Hinden & Deering                      Standards Track                      [Page 1]  
□  
RFC 3513                      IPv6 Addressing Architecture                      April 2003

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....3  
2. IPv6 Addressing.....3

2.1	Addressing Model.....	4
2.2	Text Representation of Addresses.....	4
2.3	Text Representation of Address Prefixes.....	5
2.4	Address Type Identification.....	6
2.5	Unicast Addresses.....	7
2.5.1	Interface Identifiers.....	8
2.5.2	The Unspecified Address.....	9
2.5.3	The Loopback Address.....	9
2.5.4	Global Unicast Addresses.....	10
2.5.5	IPv6 Addresses with Embedded IPv4 Addresses.....	10
2.5.6	Local-use IPv6 Unicast Addresses.....	11
2.6	Anycast Addresses.....	12
2.6.1	Required Anycast Address.....	13
2.7	Multicast Addresses.....	13
2.7.1	Pre-Defined Multicast Addresses.....	15
2.8	A Node's Required Addresses.....	17
3.	Security Considerations.....	17
4.	IANA Considerations.....	18
5.	References.....	19
5.1	Normative References.....	19
5.2	Informative References.....	19
APPENDIX A:	Creating Modified EUI-64 format Interface IDs.....	21
APPENDIX B:	Changes from RFC-2373.....	24
Authors' Addresses.....		25
Full Copyright Statement.....		26

## 1. Introduction

This specification defines the addressing architecture of the IP Version 6 (IPv6) protocol. It includes the basic formats for the various types of IPv6 addresses (unicast, anycast, and multicast).

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## 2. IPv6 Addressing

IPv6 addresses are 128-bit identifiers for interfaces and sets of interfaces (where "interface" is as defined in section 2 of [IPV6]). There are three types of addresses:

**Unicast:** An identifier for a single interface. A packet sent to a unicast address is delivered to the interface identified by that address.

**Anycast:** An identifier for a set of interfaces (typically belonging to different nodes). A packet sent to an anycast address is delivered to one of the interfaces identified by that address (the "nearest" one, according to the routing protocols' measure of distance).

**Multicast:** An identifier for a set of interfaces (typically belonging to different nodes). A packet sent to a multicast address is delivered to all interfaces identified by that address.

There are no broadcast addresses in IPv6, their function being superseded by multicast addresses.

In this document, fields in addresses are given a specific name, for example "subnet". When this name is used with the term "ID" for identifier after the name (e.g., "subnet ID"), it refers to the contents of the named field. When it is used with the term "prefix" (e.g., "subnet prefix") it refers to all of the address from the left up to and including this field.

In IPv6, all zeros and all ones are legal values for any field, unless specifically excluded. Specifically, prefixes may contain, or end with, zero-valued fields.

Hinden & Deering

Standards Track

[Page 3]

□

RFC 3513

IPv6 Addressing Architecture

April 2003

### 2.1 Addressing Model

IPv6 addresses of all types are assigned to interfaces, not nodes. An IPv6 unicast address refers to a single interface. Since each interface belongs to a single node, any of that node's interfaces' unicast addresses may be used as an identifier for the node.

All interfaces are required to have at least one link-local unicast address (see section 2.8 for additional required addresses). A single interface may also have multiple IPv6 addresses of any type (unicast, anycast, and multicast) or scope. Unicast addresses with scope greater than link-scope are not needed for interfaces that are not used as the origin or destination of any IPv6 packets to or from non-neighbors. This is sometimes convenient for point-to-point interfaces. There is one exception to this addressing model:

A unicast address or a set of unicast addresses may be assigned to multiple physical interfaces if the implementation treats the multiple physical interfaces as one interface when presenting it to the internet layer. This is useful for load-sharing over

multiple physical interfaces.

Currently IPv6 continues the IPv4 model that a subnet prefix is associated with one link. Multiple subnet prefixes may be assigned to the same link.

## 2.2 Text Representation of Addresses

There are three conventional forms for representing IPv6 addresses as text strings:

1. The preferred form is x:x:x:x:x:x:x:x, where the 'x's are the hexadecimal values of the eight 16-bit pieces of the address.

Examples:

```
FEDC:BA98:7654:3210:FEDC:BA98:7654:3210
```

```
1080:0:0:0:8:800:200C:417A
```

Note that it is not necessary to write the leading zeros in an individual field, but there must be at least one numeral in every field (except for the case described in 2.).

2. Due to some methods of allocating certain styles of IPv6 addresses, it will be common for addresses to contain long strings of zero bits. In order to make writing addresses containing zero bits easier a special syntax is available to compress the zeros.

Hinden & Deering

Standards Track

[Page 4]

□

RFC 3513

IPv6 Addressing Architecture

April 2003

The use of "::" indicates one or more groups of 16 bits of zeros. The "::" can only appear once in an address. The "::" can also be used to compress leading or trailing zeros in an address.

For example, the following addresses:

```
1080:0:0:0:8:800:200C:417A  a unicast address
FF01:0:0:0:0:0:0:101      a multicast address
0:0:0:0:0:0:0:1          the loopback address
0:0:0:0:0:0:0:0          the unspecified addresses
```

may be represented as:

```
1080::8:800:200C:417A      a unicast address
FF01::101                  a multicast address
::1                         the loopback address
::                           the unspecified addresses
```

3. An alternative form that is sometimes more convenient when dealing with a mixed environment of IPv4 and IPv6 nodes is x:x:x:x:x:x:d.d.d.d, where the 'x's are the hexadecimal values of the six high-order 16-bit pieces of the address, and the 'd's are the decimal values of the four low-order 8-bit pieces of the address (standard IPv4 representation). Examples:

```
0:0:0:0:0:0:13.1.68.3
```

```
0:0:0:0:0:FFFF:129.144.52.38
```

or in compressed form:

::13.1.68.3

::FFFF:129.144.52.38

### 2.3 Text Representation of Address Prefixes

The text representation of IPv6 address prefixes is similar to the way IPv4 addresses prefixes are written in CIDR notation [CIDR]. An IPv6 address prefix is represented by the notation:

ipv6-address/prefix-length

where

ipv6-address is an IPv6 address in any of the notations listed in section 2.2.

Hinden & Deering	Standards Track	[Page 5]
□		
RFC 3513	IPv6 Addressing Architecture	April 2003

prefix-length is a decimal value specifying how many of the leftmost contiguous bits of the address comprise the prefix.

For example, the following are legal representations of the 60-bit prefix 12AB00000000CD3 (hexadecimal):

12AB:0000:0000:CD30:0000:0000:0000:0000/60  
 12AB::CD30:0:0:0:0/60  
 12AB:0:0:CD30::/60

The following are NOT legal representations of the above prefix:

12AB:0:0:CD3/60 may drop leading zeros, but not trailing zeros, within any 16-bit chunk of the address

12AB::CD30/60 address to left of "/" expands to 12AB:0000:0000:0000:0000:000:0000:CD30

12AB::CD3/60 address to left of "/" expands to 12AB:0000:0000:0000:0000:000:0000:0CD3

When writing both a node address and a prefix of that node address (e.g., the node's subnet prefix), the two can be combined as follows:

the node address 12AB:0:0:CD30:123:4567:89AB:CDEF  
 and its subnet number 12AB:0:0:CD30::/60

can be abbreviated as 12AB:0:0:CD30:123:4567:89AB:CDEF/60

### 2.4 Address Type Identification

The type of an IPv6 address is identified by the high-order bits of the address, as follows:

Address type	Binary prefix	IPv6 notation	Section
--------------	---------------	---------------	---------

Unspecified	00...0 (128 bits)	::/128	2.5.2
Loopback	00...1 (128 bits)	::1/128	2.5.3
Multicast	11111111	FF00::/8	2.7
Link-local unicast	1111111010	FE80::/10	2.5.6
Site-local unicast	1111111011	FEC0::/10	2.5.6
Global unicast	(everything else)		

Anycast addresses are taken from the unicast address spaces (of any scope) and are not syntactically distinguishable from unicast addresses.

Hinden &amp; Deering

Standards Track

[Page 6]

□

RFC 3513

IPv6 Addressing Architecture

April 2003

The general format of global unicast addresses is described in section 2.5.4. Some special-purpose subtypes of global unicast addresses which contain embedded IPv4 addresses (for the purposes of IPv4-IPv6 interoperation) are described in section 2.5.5.

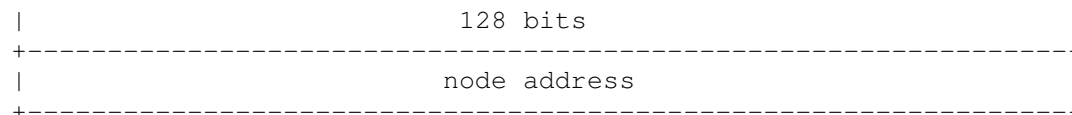
Future specifications may redefine one or more sub-ranges of the global unicast space for other purposes, but unless and until that happens, implementations must treat all addresses that do not start with any of the above-listed prefixes as global unicast addresses.

## 2.5 Unicast Addresses

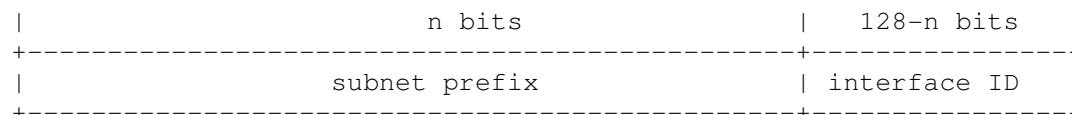
IPv6 unicast addresses are aggregable with prefixes of arbitrary bit-length similar to IPv4 addresses under Classless Interdomain Routing.

There are several types of unicast addresses in IPv6, in particular global unicast, site-local unicast, and link-local unicast. There are also some special-purpose subtypes of global unicast, such as IPv6 addresses with embedded IPv4 addresses or encoded NSAP addresses. Additional address types or subtypes can be defined in the future.

IPv6 nodes may have considerable or little knowledge of the internal structure of the IPv6 address, depending on the role the node plays (for instance, host versus router). At a minimum, a node may consider that unicast addresses (including its own) have no internal structure:



A slightly sophisticated host (but still rather simple) may additionally be aware of subnet prefix(es) for the link(s) it is attached to, where different addresses may have different values for n:



Though a very simple router may have no knowledge of the internal structure of IPv6 unicast addresses, routers will more generally have knowledge of one or more of the hierarchical boundaries for the operation of routing protocols. The known boundaries will differ

Hinden &amp; Deering

Standards Track

[Page 7]

□

RFC 3513

IPv6 Addressing Architecture

April 2003

from router to router, depending on what positions the router holds in the routing hierarchy.

### 2.5.1 Interface Identifiers

Interface identifiers in IPv6 unicast addresses are used to identify interfaces on a link. They are required to be unique within a subnet prefix. It is recommended that the same interface identifier not be assigned to different nodes on a link. They may also be unique over a broader scope. In some cases an interface's identifier will be derived directly from that interface's link-layer address. The same interface identifier may be used on multiple interfaces on a single node, as long as they are attached to different subnets.

Note that the uniqueness of interface identifiers is independent of the uniqueness of IPv6 addresses. For example, a global unicast address may be created with a non-global scope interface identifier and a site-local address may be created with a global scope interface identifier.

For all unicast addresses, except those that start with binary value 000, Interface IDs are required to be 64 bits long and to be constructed in Modified EUI-64 format.

Modified EUI-64 format based Interface identifiers may have global scope when derived from a global token (e.g., IEEE 802 48-bit MAC or IEEE EUI-64 identifiers [EUI64]) or may have local scope where a global token is not available (e.g., serial links, tunnel end-points, etc.) or where global tokens are undesirable (e.g., temporary tokens for privacy [PRIV]).

Modified EUI-64 format interface identifiers are formed by inverting the "u" bit (universal/local bit in IEEE EUI-64 terminology) when forming the interface identifier from IEEE EUI-64 identifiers. In the resulting Modified EUI-64 format the "u" bit is set to one (1) to indicate global scope, and it is set to zero (0) to indicate local scope. The first three octets in binary of an IEEE EUI-64 identifier are as follows:

```

    0      0 0      1 1      2
    |0      7 8      5 6      3|
    +-----+-----+-----+-----+
    |cccc|ccug|cccc|cccc|cccc|cccc|
    +-----+-----+-----+-----+
  
```

written in Internet standard bit-order, where "u" is the universal/local bit, "g" is the individual/group bit, and "c" are the bits of the company\_id. Appendix A: "Creating Modified EUI-64 format

Hinden &amp; Deering

Standards Track

[Page 8]

□

RFC 3513

IPv6 Addressing Architecture

April 2003

Interface Identifiers" provides examples on the creation of Modified EUI-64 format based interface identifiers.

The motivation for inverting the "u" bit when forming an interface identifier is to make it easy for system administrators to hand configure non-global identifiers when hardware tokens are not available. This is expected to be case for serial links, tunnel endpoints, etc. The alternative would have been for these to be of the form 0200:0:0:1, 0200:0:0:2, etc., instead of the much simpler 1, 2, etc.

The use of the universal/local bit in the Modified EUI-64 format identifier is to allow development of future technology that can take advantage of interface identifiers with global scope.

The details of forming interface identifiers are defined in the appropriate "IPv6 over <link>" specification such as "IPv6 over Ethernet" [ETHER], "IPv6 over FDDI" [FDDI], etc.

#### 2.5.2 The Unspecified Address

The address 0:0:0:0:0:0:0:0 is called the unspecified address. It must never be assigned to any node. It indicates the absence of an address. One example of its use is in the Source Address field of any IPv6 packets sent by an initializing host before it has learned its own address.

The unspecified address must not be used as the destination address of IPv6 packets or in IPv6 Routing Headers. An IPv6 packet with a source address of unspecified must never be forwarded by an IPv6 router.

#### 2.5.3 The Loopback Address

The unicast address 0:0:0:0:0:0:0:1 is called the loopback address. It may be used by a node to send an IPv6 packet to itself. It may never be assigned to any physical interface. It is treated as having link-local scope, and may be thought of as the link-local unicast address of a virtual interface (typically called "the loopback interface") to an imaginary link that goes nowhere.

The loopback address must not be used as the source address in IPv6 packets that are sent outside of a single node. An IPv6 packet with a destination address of loopback must never be sent outside of a single node and must never be forwarded by an IPv6 router. A packet received on an interface with destination address of loopback must be dropped.

Hinden &amp; Deering

Standards Track

[Page 9]

□

RFC 3513

IPv6 Addressing Architecture

April 2003

#### 2.5.4 Global Unicast Addresses

The general format for IPv6 global unicast addresses is as follows:



10	54 bits	64 bits
bits		
+-----+	+-----+	+-----+
1111111010	0	interface ID
+-----+	+-----+	+-----+

Link-Local addresses are designed to be used for addressing on a single link for purposes such as automatic address configuration, neighbor discovery, or when no routers are present.

Routers must not forward any packets with link-local source or destination addresses to other links.

Site-Local addresses have the following format:

10	54 bits	64 bits
bits		
+-----+	+-----+	+-----+
1111111011	subnet ID	interface ID
+-----+	+-----+	+-----+

Site-local addresses are designed to be used for addressing inside of a site without the need for a global prefix. Although a subnet ID may be up to 54-bits long, it is expected that globally-connected sites will use the same subnet IDs for site-local and global prefixes.

Routers must not forward any packets with site-local source or destination addresses outside of the site.

## 2.6 Anycast Addresses

An IPv6 anycast address is an address that is assigned to more than one interface (typically belonging to different nodes), with the property that a packet sent to an anycast address is routed to the "nearest" interface having that address, according to the routing protocols' measure of distance.

Anycast addresses are allocated from the unicast address space, using any of the defined unicast address formats. Thus, anycast addresses are syntactically indistinguishable from unicast addresses. When a unicast address is assigned to more than one interface, thus turning it into an anycast address, the nodes to which the address is assigned must be explicitly configured to know that it is an anycast address.

For any assigned anycast address, there is a longest prefix P of that address that identifies the topological region in which all interfaces belonging to that anycast address reside. Within the region identified by P, the anycast address must be maintained as a







values.

Use of these group IDs for any other scope values, with the T flag equal to 0, is not allowed.

Hinden & Deering

Standards Track

[Page 15]

□

RFC 3513

IPv6 Addressing Architecture

April 2003

```

Reserved Multicast Addresses:  FF00:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF01:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF02:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF03:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF04:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF05:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF06:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF07:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF08:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF09:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF0A:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF0B:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF0C:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF0D:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF0E:0:0:0:0:0:0:0
                                FF0F:0:0:0:0:0:0:0

```

The above multicast addresses are reserved and shall never be assigned to any multicast group.

```

All Nodes Addresses:  FF01:0:0:0:0:0:0:1
                      FF02:0:0:0:0:0:0:1

```

The above multicast addresses identify the group of all IPv6 nodes, within scope 1 (interface-local) or 2 (link-local).

```

All Routers Addresses:  FF01:0:0:0:0:0:0:2
                       FF02:0:0:0:0:0:0:2
                       FF05:0:0:0:0:0:0:2

```

The above multicast addresses identify the group of all IPv6 routers, within scope 1 (interface-local), 2 (link-local), or 5 (site-local).

```

Solicited-Node Address:  FF02:0:0:0:0:1:FFXX:XXXX

```

Solicited-node multicast address are computed as a function of a node's unicast and anycast addresses. A solicited-node multicast address is formed by taking the low-order 24 bits of an address (unicast or anycast) and appending those bits to the prefix FF02:0:0:0:0:1:FF00::/104 resulting in a multicast address in the range

```

FF02:0:0:0:0:1:FF00:0000

```

to

```

FF02:0:0:0:0:1:FFFF:FFFF

```

Hinden & Deering

Standards Track

[Page 16]

□

RFC 3513

IPv6 Addressing Architecture

April 2003

For example, the solicited node multicast address corresponding to the IPv6 address 4037::01:800:200E:8C6C is FF02::1:FF0E:8C6C. IPv6 addresses that differ only in the high-order bits, e.g., due to multiple high-order prefixes associated with different aggregations, will map to the same solicited-node address thereby, reducing the number of multicast addresses a node must join.

A node is required to compute and join (on the appropriate interface) the associated Solicited-Node multicast addresses for every unicast and anycast address it is assigned.

## 2.8 A Node's Required Addresses

A host is required to recognize the following addresses as identifying itself:

- o Its required Link-Local Address for each interface.
- o Any additional Unicast and Anycast Addresses that have been configured for the node's interfaces (manually or automatically).
- o The loopback address.
- o The All-Nodes Multicast Addresses defined in section 2.7.1.
- o The Solicited-Node Multicast Address for each of its unicast and anycast addresses.
- o Multicast Addresses of all other groups to which the node belongs.

A router is required to recognize all addresses that a host is required to recognize, plus the following addresses as identifying itself:

- o The Subnet-Router Anycast Addresses for all interfaces for which it is configured to act as a router.
- o All other Anycast Addresses with which the router has been configured.
- o The All-Routers Multicast Addresses defined in section 2.7.1.

## 3. Security Considerations

IPv6 addressing documents do not have any direct impact on Internet infrastructure security. Authentication of IPv6 packets is defined in [AUTH].

Hinden &amp; Deering

Standards Track

[Page 17]

□

RFC 3513

IPv6 Addressing Architecture

April 2003

## 4. IANA Considerations

The table and notes at <http://www.isi.edu/in-notes/iana/assignments/ipv6-address-space.txt> should be replaced with









+-----+-----+-----+-----+

Note that this results in the universal/local bit set to "0" to indicate local scope.

#### Links without Identifiers

There are a number of links that do not have any type of built-in identifier. The most common of these are serial links and configured tunnels. Interface identifiers must be chosen that are unique within a subnet-prefix.

Hinden & Deering

Standards Track

[Page 22]

□

RFC 3513

IPv6 Addressing Architecture

April 2003

When no built-in identifier is available on a link the preferred approach is to use a global interface identifier from another interface or one which is assigned to the node itself. When using this approach no other interface connecting the same node to the same subnet-prefix may use the same identifier.

If there is no global interface identifier available for use on the link the implementation needs to create a local-scope interface identifier. The only requirement is that it be unique within a subnet prefix. There are many possible approaches to select a subnet-prefix-unique interface identifier. These include:

- Manual Configuration
- Node Serial Number
- Other node-specific token

The subnet-prefix-unique interface identifier should be generated in a manner that it does not change after a reboot of a node or if interfaces are added or deleted from the node.

The selection of the appropriate algorithm is link and implementation dependent. The details on forming interface identifiers are defined in the appropriate "IPv6 over <link>" specification. It is strongly recommended that a collision detection algorithm be implemented as part of any automatic algorithm.



□

RFC 3513

IPv6 Addressing Architecture

April 2003

- Removed the ABNF Description of Text Representations Appendix.
- Removed the address block reserved for IPX addresses.
- Multicast scope changes:
  - o Changed name of scope value 1 from "node-local" to "interface-local"
  - o Defined scope value 4 as "admin-local"
- Corrected reference to RFC1933 and updated references.
- Many small changes to clarify and make the text more consistent.

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Hinden &amp; Deering

Standards Track

[Page 25]

□

RFC 3513

IPv6 Addressing Architecture

April 2003

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