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PPP over SONET/SDH

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

The Point-to-Point Protocol (PPP) [1] provides a standard method for transporting multi-protocol datagrams over point-to-point links. This document describes the use of PPP over Synchronous Optical Network (SONET) and Synchronous Digital Hierarchy (SDH) circuits.

This document replaces and obsoletes RFC 1619. See section 7 for a summary of the changes from RFC 1619.

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1. Introduction

PPP was designed as a standard method of communicating over point-to-point links. Initial deployment has been over short local lines, leased lines, and plain-old-telephone-service (POTS) using modems. As new packet services and higher speed lines are introduced, PPP is easily deployed in these environments as well.

This specification is primarily concerned with the use of the PPP encapsulation over SONET/SDH links. Since SONET/SDH is by definition a point-to-point circuit, PPP is well suited to use over these links.

Real differences between SONET and SDH (other than terminology) are minor; for the purposes of encapsulation of PPP over SONET/SDH, they are inconsequential or irrelevant.

For the convenience of the reader, we list the equivalent terms below:

SONET	SDH
-----	-----
SPE	VC
STS-SPE	Higher Order VC (VC-3/4/4-Nc)
STS-1 frame	STM-0 frame (rarely used)
STS-1-SPE	VC-3
STS-1 payload	C-3
STS-3c frame	STM-1 frame, AU-4
STS-3c-SPE	VC-4
STS-3c payload	C-4
STS-12c/48c/192c frame	STM-4/16/64 frame, AU-4-4c/16c/64c
STS-12c/48c/192c-SPE	VC-4-4c/16c/64c
STS-12c/48c/192c payload	C-4-4c/16c/64c

The only currently supported SONET/SDH SPE/VCS are the following:

SONET	SDH
-----	-----
STS-3c-SPE	VC-4
STS-12c-SPE	VC-4-4c
STS-48c-SPE	VC-4-16c
STS-192c-SPE	VC-4-64c

The keywords MUST, MUST NOT, MAY, OPTIONAL, REQUIRED, RECOMMENDED, SHALL, SHALL NOT, SHOULD, and SHOULD NOT are to be interpreted as defined in [6].

2. Physical Layer Requirements

PPP treats SONET/SDH transport as octet oriented synchronous links. SONET/SDH links are full-duplex by definition.

Interface Format

PPP in HDLC-like framing presents an octet interface to the physical layer. There is no provision for sub-octets to be supplied or accepted [3][5].

The octet stream is mapped into the SONET STS-SPE/SDH Higher Order VC, with the octet boundaries aligned with the SONET STS-SPE/SDH Higher Order VC octet boundaries.

Scrambling is performed during insertion into the SONET STS-SPE/SDH Higher Order VC to provide adequate transparency and protect against potential security threats (see Section 6). For backwards compatibility with RFC 1619 (STS-3c-SPE/VC-4 only), the scrambler MAY have an on/off capability where the scrambler is bypassed entirely when it is in the off mode. If this capability is provided, the default MUST be set to scrambling enabled.

For PPP over SONET/SDH, the entire SONET/SDH payload (SONET STS-SPE/SDH Higher Order VC minus the path overhead and any fixed stuff) is scrambled using a self-synchronous scrambler of polynomial $X^{43} + 1$. See Section 4 for the description of the scrambler.

The proper order of operation is:

When transmitting:

IP -> PPP -> FCS generation -> Byte stuffing -> Scrambling ->
SONET/SDH framing

When receiving:

SONET/SDH framing -> Descrambling -> Byte destuffing -> FCS
detection -> PPP -> IP

The Path Signal Label (C2) indicates the contents of the SONET STS-SPE/SDH Higher Order VC. The value of 22 (16 hex) is used to indicate PPP with $X^{43} + 1$ scrambling [4].

For compatibility with RFC 1619 (STS-3c-SPE/VC-4 only), if scrambling has been configured to be off, then the value 207 (CF hex) is used for the Path Signal Label to indicate PPP without scrambling.

5. Configuration Details

Other than the FCS length (see below), the standard LCP sync configuration defaults apply to SONET/SDH links.

The following Configuration Options are RECOMMENDED for STS-3c-SPE/VC-4:

- Magic Number
- No Address and Control Field Compression
- No Protocol Field Compression

For operation at STS-12c-SPE/VC-4-4c and above, Address and Control Field Compression and Protocol Field Compression are NOT RECOMMENDED. The Magic Number option remains RECOMMENDED.

Regarding the FCS length, with one exception, the 32-bit FCS MUST be used for all SONET/SDH rates. For STS-3c-SPE/VC-4 only, the 16-bit FCS MAY be used, although the 32-bit FCS is RECOMMENDED. The FCS length is set by provisioning and is not negotiated.

6. Security Considerations

The major change from RFC 1619 is the addition of payload scrambling when inserting the HDLC-like framed PPP packets into the SONET STS-SPE/SDH Higher Order VC. RFC 1619 was operationally found to permit malicious users to generate packets with bit patterns that could create SONET/SDH-layer low-transition-density synchronization problems, emulation of the SDH set-reset scrambler pattern, and replication of the STM-N frame alignment word.

The use of the $x^{43} + 1$ self-synchronous scrambler was introduced to alleviate these potential security problems. Predicting the output of the scrambler requires knowledge of the 43-bit state of the transmitter as the scrambling of a known input is begun. This requires knowledge of both the initial 43-bit state of the scrambler when it started and every byte of data scrambled by the device since it was started. The odds of guessing correctly are $1/2^{43}$, with the additional probability of $1/127$ that a correct guess will leave the frame properly aligned in the SONET/SDH payload, which results in a probability of $9e-16$ against being able to deliberately cause SONET/SDH-layer problems. This seems reasonably secure for this application.

This scrambler is also used when transmitting ATM over SONET/SDH, and public network carriers have considerable experience with its use.

A known security issue is bandwidth reduction by intentional transmission of characters or sequences requiring transparency processing by including flag and/or escape characters in user data. A user may cause up to a 100% increase in the bandwidth required for transmitting his or her packets by filling the packet with flag and/or escape characters.

7. Changes from RFC 1619

As mentioned in the previous section, the major change from RFC 1619 was the addition of payload scrambling when inserting the HDLC-like framed PPP packets into the SONET STS-SPE/SDH Higher Order VC. Other changes were:

The terminology was updated to better match that used by ANSI and ITU-T.

The specification's applicability is now specifically restricted to:

SONET	SDH
-----	-----
STS-3c-SPE	VC-4
STS-12c-SPE	VC-4-4c
STS-48c-SPE	VC-4-16c
STS-192c-SPE	VC-4-64c

The Path Signal Label (C2) is set to 22 (16 hex) when using X^43 + 1 scrambling.

The 32-bit FCS is required except for operation with STS-3c-SPE/VC-4, in which case the 16-bit FCS is allowed (but the 32-bit FCS is still recommended).

The Security Considerations section was added.

8. Intellectual Property

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10. References

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