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This Internet-Draft will expire on October 1, 2008.

Abstract

This document provides advice on the filtering of ICMPv4 and ICMPv6 messages. Additionally, it discusses the operational and interoperability implications of such filtering.

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ICMP Filtering

March 2008

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## [1.](#) Introduction

This document document provides advice on the filtering of ICMPv4 and ICMPv6 messages. Additionally, it discusses the operational and interoperability implications of such filtering.

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [RFC 2119](#) [[RFC2119](#)].

## [2.](#) Internet Control Message Protocol version 4 (ICMP)

### [2.1.](#) ICMPv4 error messages

[RFC0792] is the base specification for the Internet Control Message Protocol (ICMP) to be used with the Internet Protocol version 4 (IPv4). It defines, among other things, a number of error messages that can be used by end-systems and intermediate systems to report errors to the sending system. The Host Requirements RFC [[RFC1122](#)] classifies ICMP error messages into those that indicate "soft errors", and those that indicate "hard errors", thus roughly defining

the semantics of them.

[Section 3.2.2.1 of \[RFC1122\]](#) specifies the amount of information to be included in the payload of an ICMP error message, and how ICMP error messages should be demultiplexed to the corresponding transport protocol instance. Additionally, it imposes details some scenarios in which ICMP errors should not be generated.

[Section 4.1.3.3 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that UDP MUST pass to the application layer all ICMP error messages that it receives from the IP layer.

[Section 4.2.3.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that TCP MUST act on an ICMP error message passed up from the IP layer, directing it to the connection that created the error.

[Section 4.3.2 of \[RFC1812\]](#) contains a number of requirements for the generation and processing of ICMP error messages, including: initialization of the TTL of the error message, the amount of data from the offending packet to be included in the ICMP payload, setting the IP Source Address of ICMP error messages, setting of the TOS and Precedence, processing of IP Source Route option in offending packets, scenarios in which routers MUST NOT send ICMP error messages, and application of rate-limiting to ICMP error messages.

The ICMP specification [\[RFC0792\]](#) also defines the ICMP Source Quench

message (type 4, code 0), which is meant to provide a mechanism for flow control and congestion control.

[RFC1191] defines a mechanism called "Path MTU Discovery" (PMTUD), which makes use of ICMP error messages of type 3 (Destination Unreachable), code 4 (fragmentation needed and DF bit set) to allow systems to determine the MTU of an arbitrary internet path.

[Appendix D of \[RFC4301\]](#) provides information about which ICMP error messages are produced by hosts, intermediate routers, or both.

#### [2.1.1. Destination Unreachable \(Type 3\)](#)

The ICMP Destination Unreachable message is sent by a router in response to a packet which it cannot forward because the destination

(or next hop) is unreachable or a service is unavailable. Examples of such cases include a message addressed to a host which is not there and therefore does not respond to ARP requests, and messages addressed to network prefixes for which the router has no valid route. [[RFC1812](#)] states that a router MUST be able to generate ICMP Destination Unreachable messages and SHOULD choose a response code that most closely matches the reason the message is being generated. [Section 3.2.2.1 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that a Destination Unreachable message that is received MUST be reported to the transport layer, and that the transport layer SHOULD use the information appropriately.

#### [2.1.1.1.1.](#) Net Unreachable (code 0)

##### [2.1.1.1.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)]. [Section 4.3.3.1 of \[RFC1812\]](#) states that if a router cannot forward a packet because it has no routes at all (including no default route) to the destination specified in the packet, then the router MUST generate a Destination Unreachable, Code 0 (Network Unreachable) ICMP message. [Section 3.2.2.1 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that this message may result from a routing transient, and MUST therefore be interpreted as only a hint, not proof, that the specified destination is unreachable. For example, it MUST NOT be used as proof of a dead gateway. [Section 4.2.3.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that this message indicates a soft error, and therefore TCP MUST NOT abort the connection, and SHOULD make the information available to the application.

##### [2.1.1.1.2.](#) Uses

##### [2.1.1.1.3.](#) Threats

##### [2.1.1.1.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts that could have been avoided by those systems aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [2.1.1.2.](#) Host Unreachable (code 1)

##### [2.1.1.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)]. [Section 3.2.2.1 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that this message may result from a routing transient, and MUST therefore be interpreted as only a hint, not proof, that the specified destination is unreachable. For example, it MUST NOT be used as proof of a dead gateway. [Section 4.2.3.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that this message indicates a soft error, and therefore TCP MUST NOT abort the connection, and SHOULD make the information available to the application.

##### [2.1.1.2.2.](#) Uses

##### [2.1.1.2.3.](#) Threats

##### [2.1.1.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts that could have been avoided by those systems aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [2.1.1.3.](#) Protocol Unreachable (code 2)

##### [2.1.1.3.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)]. [[RFC1122](#)] states that a host SHOULD send a protocol unreachable when the designated transport protocol is not supported. [Section 4.2.3.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that this message indicates a hard error condition, so TCP SHOULD abort the connection.

##### [2.1.1.3.2.](#) Uses

##### [2.1.1.3.3.](#) Threats



#### [2.1.1.3.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts that could have been avoided by those systems aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [2.1.1.4.](#) Port Unreachable (code 3)

##### [2.1.1.4.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)]. [Section 3.2.2.1 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that a host SHOULD send an ICMP port unreachable when the designated transport protocol (e.g., UDP) is unable to demultiplex the datagram but has no protocol mechanism to inform the sender. Additionally, it states that a transport protocol that has its own mechanism for notifying the sender that a port is unreachable MUST nevertheless accept an ICMP Port Unreachable for the same purpose.

[Section 4.2.3.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that this message indicates a hard error condition, so TCP SHOULD abort the connection.

##### [2.1.1.4.2.](#) Uses

##### [2.1.1.4.3.](#) Threats

##### [2.1.1.4.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [2.1.1.5.](#) Fragmentation needed and DF set (code 4)

##### [2.1.1.5.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)]

##### [2.1.1.5.2.](#) Uses

Used for the Path-MTU Discovery mechanism described in [[RFC1191](#)].

### [2.1.1.5.3.](#) Threats

This error message can be used to perform Denial of Service (DoS) attacks against transport protocols. [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-icmp-attacks](#)] describes the use of this error message to attack TCP connections.

### [2.1.1.5.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

Filtering this error message breaks the Path-MTU Discovery mechanism described in [[RFC1191](#)].

### [2.1.1.6.](#) Source Route Failed (code 5)

#### [2.1.1.6.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)]. [Section 3.2.2.1 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that this message may result from a routing transient, and MUST therefore be interpreted as only a hint, not proof, that the specified destination is unreachable. For example, it MUST NOT be used as proof of a dead gateway. [Section 4.2.3.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that this message indicates a soft error, and therefore TCP MUST NOT abort the connection, and SHOULD make the information available to the application.

[Section 4.2.3.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that this message indicates a hard error condition, so TCP SHOULD abort the connection.

#### [2.1.1.6.2.](#) Uses

Signals errors arising from IPv4 source routes.

#### [2.1.1.6.3.](#) Threats

There shouldn't be any security threats arising from the use of this error message.

#### [2.1.1.6.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

### [2.1.1.7.](#) Destination network unknown (code 6) (Deprecated)

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#### [2.1.1.7.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC1122](#)]. [[RFC1812](#)] states that this code SHOULD NOT be generated since it would imply on the part of the router that the destination network does not exist (net unreachable code 0 SHOULD be used in place of code 6).

#### [2.1.1.7.2.](#) Uses

Signal unreachability condition to the sending system.

#### [2.1.1.7.3.](#) Threats

There shouldn't be any security threats arising from the use of this error message.

#### [2.1.1.7.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [2.1.1.8.](#) Destination host unknown (code 7)

##### [2.1.1.8.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC1122](#)], and is generated only when a router can determine (from link layer advice) that the destination host does not exist

##### [2.1.1.8.2.](#) Uses

Signal unreachability condition to the sending system.

##### [2.1.1.8.3.](#) Threats

There shouldn't be any security threats arising from the use of this error message.

#### [2.1.1.8.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

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#### [2.1.1.9.](#) Source host isolated (code 8) (Deprecated)

##### [2.1.1.9.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC1122](#)]. [[RFC1812](#)] states that routers SHOULD NOT generate this error message, and states that whichever of Codes 0 (Network Unreachable) and 1 (Host Unreachable) is appropriate SHOULD be used instead.

##### [2.1.1.9.2.](#) Uses

Signal unreachability condition to the sending system.

##### [2.1.1.9.3.](#) Threats

There shouldn't be any security threats arising from the use of this error message.

##### [2.1.1.9.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)]. However, this error message is deprecated, and thus system should not depend on it for any purpose.

#### [2.1.1.10.](#) Communication with destination network administratively prohibited (code 9) - Deprecated

##### [2.1.1.10.1.](#) Message specification

This error code is defined in [[RFC1122](#)], and was intended for use by

end-to-end encryption devices used by U.S military agencies. [\[RFC1812\]](#) deprecates its use, stating that routers SHOULD use the Code 13 (Communication Administratively Prohibited) if they administratively filter packets.

#### [2.1.1.10.2.](#) Uses

Signal unreachability condition to the sending system.

#### [2.1.1.10.3.](#) Threats

May reveal filtering policies.

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#### [2.1.1.10.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [\[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors\]](#). However, this error message is deprecated, and thus system should not depend on it for any purpose.

#### [2.1.1.11.](#) Communication with destination host administratively prohibited (code 10) - Deprecated

##### [2.1.1.11.1.](#) Message specification

This error code is defined in [\[RFC1122\]](#), and was intended for use by end-to-end encryption devices used by U.S military agencies. [\[RFC1812\]](#) deprecates its use, stating that routers SHOULD use the Code 13 (Communication Administratively Prohibited) if they administratively filter packets.

##### [2.1.1.11.2.](#) Uses

Signal unreachability condition to the sending system.

##### [2.1.1.11.3.](#) Threats

May reveal filtering policies.

#### [2.1.1.11.4](#). Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)]. However, this error message is deprecated, and thus system should not depend on it for any purpose.

#### [2.1.1.12](#). Network unreachable for type of service (code 11)

##### [2.1.1.12.1](#). Message specification

Defined in [[RFC1122](#)]. [Section 4.3.3.1 of \[RFC1812\]](#) states that if a router cannot forward a packet because the TOS specified for the routes is neither the default TOS (0000) nor the TOS of the packet that the router is attempting to route, then the router MUST generate a Destination Unreachable, Code 11 (Network Unreachable for TOS) ICMP message.

##### [2.1.1.12.2](#). Uses

Signal unreachability condition to the sending system.

##### [2.1.1.12.3](#). Threats

May reveal routing policies.

#### [2.1.1.12.4](#). Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [2.1.1.13](#). Host unreachable for type of service (code 12)

##### [2.1.1.13.1](#). Message specification

Defined in [[RFC1122](#)]. [Section 4.3.3.1 of \[RFC1812\]](#) states that this message is sent if a packet is to be forwarded to a host that is on a network that is directly connected to the router and the router cannot forward the packet because no route to the destination has a TOS that is either equal to the TOS requested in the packet or is the default TOS (0000).

#### [2.1.1.13.2](#). Uses

Signal unreachability condition to the sending system.

#### [2.1.1.13.3](#). Threats

May reveal routing policies.

#### [2.1.1.13.4](#). Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

### [2.1.1.14](#). Communication Administratively Prohibited (code 13)

#### [2.1.1.14.1](#). Message specification

Defined in [[RFC1812](#)], and is generated if a router cannot forward a packet due to administrative filtering.

#### [2.1.1.14.2](#). Uses

Signal unreachability condition (due to filtering policies) to the sending system.

#### [2.1.1.14.3](#). Threats

Given that the semantics of this error message are not accurately specified, some systems might abort transport connections upon receipt of this error message. [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-icmp-attacks](#)].

#### [2.1.1.14.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [2.1.1.15.](#) Host Precedence Violation (code 14)

##### [2.1.1.15.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC1812](#)], and is sent by the first hop router to a host to indicate that a requested precedence is not permitted for the particular combination of source/destination host or network, upper layer protocol, and source/destination port

##### [2.1.1.15.2.](#) Uses

Signal unreachability condition to the sending system.

##### [2.1.1.15.3.](#) Threats

May reveal routing policies.

#### [2.1.1.15.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [2.1.1.16.](#) Precedence cutoff in effect (code 15)

##### [2.1.1.16.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC1812](#)], and is sent when the network operators have imposed a minimum level of precedence required for operation, and a

datagram was sent with a precedence below this level.

##### [2.1.1.16.2.](#) Uses



### [2.1.1.16.3.](#) Threats

### [2.1.1.16.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

## [2.1.2.](#) Source Quench (Type 4, Code 0)

### [2.1.2.1.](#) Message specification

The Source Quench message is defined in [[RFC0792](#)].

[Section 3.2.2.3 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that host MAY send a Source Quench message if it is approaching, or has reached, the point at which it is forced to discard incoming datagrams due to a shortage of reassembly buffers or other resources. It also states that if a Source Quench message is received, the IP layer MUST pass it to the transport layer, which SHOULD implement a mechanism for responding to ICMP Source Quench messages.

[Section 4.2.3.9](#) of the Host Requirements RFC [[RFC1122](#)] states that TCP MUST react to ICMP Source Quench messages by slowing transmission on the connection, and further further adds that the RECOMMENDED procedure is to put the corresponding connection in the slow-start phase of TCP's congestion control algorithm [[RFC2581](#)].

[Section 4.3.3.3](#) of the Requirements for IP Version 4 Routers RFC [[RFC1812](#)] notes that research seems to suggest that ICMP Source Quench is an ineffective (and unfair) antidote for congestion, and states that routers SHOULD NOT send ICMP Source Quench messages in response to congestion. A router that does originate Source Quench messages MUST be able to limit the rate at which they are generated. Finally, [Section 4.3.3.3 of \[RFC1812\]](#) states that a router MAY ignore any ICMP Source Quench messages it receives.

### [2.1.2.2.](#) Uses

### [2.1.2.3](#). Threats

### [2.1.2.4](#). Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

## [2.1.3](#). Redirect (Type 5)

[Section 3.2.2.2 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that SHOULD NOT send an ICMP Redirect message, and that a host receiving a Redirect message MUST update its routing information accordingly, and process the ICMP redirect according to the rules stated in [Section 3.3.1.2 of \[RFC1122\]](#). ICMP redirects that specify a gateway that is not on the same connected (sub-) net through which the Redirect arrived, or that are received from a source other than the first-hop gateway SHOULD be silently discarded.

[Section 4.3.3.2 of \[RFC1812\]](#) states that a router MAY ignore ICMP Redirects when choosing a path for a packet originated by the router if the router is running a routing protocol or if forwarding is enabled on the router and on the interface over which the packet is being sent.

### [2.1.3.1](#). Redirect datagrams for the Network (code 0)

#### [2.1.3.1.1](#). Message specification

Defined in [\[RFC0792\]](#).

#### [2.1.3.1.2](#). Uses

#### [2.1.3.1.3](#). Threats

#### [2.1.3.1.4](#). Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

### [2.1.3.2](#). Redirect datagrams for the Host (code 1)

#### [2.1.3.2.1](#). Message specification

Defined in [\[RFC0792\]](#).

#### [2.1.3.2.2](#). Uses

#### [2.1.3.2.3](#). Threats

#### [2.1.3.2.4](#). Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

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[2.1.3.3](#). Redirect datagrams for the Type of Service and Network (code 2)

[2.1.3.3.1](#). Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)].

[2.1.3.3.2](#). Uses

[2.1.3.3.3](#). Threats

[2.1.3.3.4](#). Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

[2.1.3.4](#). Redirect datagrams for the Type of Service and Host (code 3)

[2.1.3.4.1](#). Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)].

[2.1.3.4.2](#). Uses

[2.1.3.4.3](#). Threats

[2.1.3.4.4](#). Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

[2.1.4](#). Time exceeded (Type 11)

[Section 3.2.2.4 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that an incoming Time Exceeded message MUST be passed to the transport layer.

[Section 4.3.3.4 of \[RFC1812\]](#) states that when the router receives (i.e., is destined for the router) a Time Exceeded message, it MUST comply with [[RFC1122](#)].

[2.1.4.1](#). Time to live exceeded in transit (code 0)

[2.1.4.1.1](#). Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)].

[RFC1812] states that a router MUST generate a Time Exceeded message Code 0 (In Transit) when it discards a packet due to an expired TTL field. [Section 4.2.3.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that this message should be handled by TCP in the same way as Destination Unreachable codes 0, 1, 5.

#### [2.1.4.1.2.](#) Uses

Used for the traceroute troubleshooting tool. Signals unreachability condition due to routing loops.

#### [2.1.4.1.3.](#) Threats

Can be used for network mapping.

#### [2.1.4.1.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

Breaks the traceroute tool. May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [2.1.4.2.](#) fragment reassembly time exceeded (code 1)

##### [2.1.4.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)]. [[RFC0792](#)] states this message may be sent by a host reassembling a fragmented datagram if it cannot complete the reassembly due to missing fragments within its time limit. [Section 4.2.3.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that this message should be handled by TCP in the same way as Destination Unreachable codes 0, 1, 5.

##### [2.1.4.2.2.](#) Uses

Signals fragment reassembly timeout.

##### [2.1.4.2.3.](#) Threats

May reveal the timeout value used by a system for fragment

reassembly.

#### [2.1.4.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [2.1.5.](#) Parameter Problem (Type 12)

[Section 3.2.2.5 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that a host SHOULD generate Parameter Problem messages. An incoming Parameter Problem message MUST be passed to the transport layer, and it MAY be reported to the user. [Section 4.2.3.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that this message should

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be handled by TCP in the same way as Destination Unreachable codes 0, 1, 5.

[Section 4.3.3.5 of \[RFC1812\]](#) states that a router MUST generate a Parameter Problem message for any error not specifically covered by another ICMP message. The IP header field or IP option including the byte indicated by the pointer field MUST be included unchanged in the IP header returned with this ICMP message. [Section 4.3.2](#) of the same document defines an exception to this rule.

#### [2.1.5.1.](#) Pointer indicates the error (code 0)

##### [2.1.5.1.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)].

##### [2.1.5.1.2.](#) Uses

##### [2.1.5.1.3.](#) Threats

##### [2.1.5.1.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

#### [2.1.5.2.](#) Required option is missing (code 1)

##### [2.1.5.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [Section 3.2.2.5 of \[RFC1122\]](#). It was meant to be used in the military community for a missing security option.

[2.1.5.2.2.](#) Uses

[2.1.5.2.3.](#) Threats

[2.1.5.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

[2.2.](#) ICMPv4 Informational messages

[2.2.1.](#) Echo or Echo Reply Message

[2.2.1.1.](#) Echo message (type 8, code 0)

[2.2.1.1.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [\[RFC0792\]](#).

[Section 3.2.2.6 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that every host MUST implement an ICMP Echo server function that receives Echo Requests and sends corresponding Echo Replies. A host SHOULD also implement an

application-layer interface for sending an Echo Request and receiving an Echo Reply, for diagnostic purposes. [Section 3.2.2.6 of \[RFC1122\]](#) includes a number of requirements for the processing of ICMP Echo messages and the generation of the corresponding replies.

[Section 4.3.3.6 of \[RFC1812\]](#) contains a number of requirements with respect to the generation and processing of ICMP Echo or Echo Reply messages, including: maximum ICMP message size all routers are required to receive, a number of factors that may determine whether a router responds (or not) to an ICMP Echo message, the implementation of a user/application-layer interface, and the processing of Record Route, Timestamp and/or Source Route options that might be present in an ICMP Echo message.

[2.2.1.1.2.](#) Uses

Used by the ping troubleshooting tool.

[2.2.1.1.3.](#) Threats

Can be used for network mapping [[icmp-scanning](#)]. Has been exploited to perform Smurf attacks [[smurf](#)].

#### [2.2.1.1.4](#). Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

Filtering this error message will break the ping tool. The best current practice is to rate-limit this ICMP message.

#### [2.2.1.2](#). Echo reply message (Type 0, code 0)

##### [2.2.1.2.1](#). Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)].

[Section 3.2.2.6 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that every host MUST implement an ICMP Echo server function that receives Echo Requests and sends corresponding Echo Replies. A host SHOULD also implement an application-layer interface for sending an Echo Request and receiving an Echo Reply, for diagnostic purposes. [Section 3.2.2.6 of \[RFC1122\]](#) includes a number of requirements for the processing of ICMP Echo messages and the generation of the corresponding replies.

[Section 4.3.3.6 of \[RFC1812\]](#) contains a number of requirements with respect to the generation and processing of ICMP Echo or Echo Reply messages, including: maximum ICMP message size all routers are required to receive, a number of factors that may determine whether a router responds (or not) to an ICMP Echo message, the implementation of a user/application-layer interface, and the processing of Record

Route, Timestamp and/or Source Route options that might be present in an ICMP Echo message.

##### [2.2.1.2.2](#). Uses

Used by the ping troubleshooting tool.

##### [2.2.1.2.3](#). Threats

Can be used for network mapping [[icmp-scanning](#)]. Has been exploited to perform Smurf attacks [[smurf](#)].

#### [2.2.1.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

Filtering this error message will break the ping tool. The best current practice is to rate-limit this ICMP message.

### [2.2.2.](#) Router Solicitation or Router Advertisement message

#### [2.2.2.1.](#) Router Solicitation message (type 10, code 0)

##### [2.2.2.1.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC1256](#)]

[Section 4.3.3.10 of \[RFC1812\]](#) states that an IP router MUST support the router part of the ICMP Router Discovery Protocol on all connected networks on which the router supports either IP multicast or IP broadcast addressing. The implementation MUST include all the configuration variables specified for routers, with the specified defaults.

##### [2.2.2.1.2.](#) Uses

Used by some systems as form of stateless autoconfiguration, to solicit routers on a network segment.

##### [2.2.2.1.3.](#) Threats

Can be used for network mapping (e.g., learning about routers on a network segment.).

##### [2.2.2.1.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

This messages should ot be routed. Therefore, there is no operational/interoperability impact if blocked.

#### [2.2.2.2.](#) Router Advertisement message (type 9, code 0)

##### [2.2.2.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC1256](#)]



[Section 4.3.3.10 of \[RFC1812\]](#) states that an IP router MUST support the router part of the ICMP Router Discovery Protocol on all connected networks on which the router supports either IP multicast or IP broadcast addressing. The implementation MUST include all the configuration variables specified for routers, with the specified defaults.

#### [2.2.2.2.2.](#) Uses

Used to advertise routers on a network segment.

#### [2.2.2.2.3.](#) Threats

Can be spoofed by an attacker to direct all traffic sent on a network segment to itself.

#### [2.2.2.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

This messages should not be routed. Therefore, there is no operational/interoperability impact if blocked.

### [2.2.3.](#) Timestamp or Timestamp Reply Message

#### [2.2.3.1.](#) Timestamp message (type 13, code 0)

##### [2.2.3.1.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [\[RFC0792\]](#).

[Section 3.2.2.8 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that a host MAY implement Timestamp and Timestamp Reply. For hosts that implement these messages, a number of requirements are stated.

##### [2.2.3.1.2.](#) Uses

##### [2.2.3.1.3.](#) Threats

Can be used for network mapping, and device fingerprinting.

#### [2.2.3.1.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

None.

#### [2.2.3.2.](#) Timestamp reply message (type 14, code 0)

##### [2.2.3.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)].

##### [2.2.3.2.2.](#) Uses

##### [2.2.3.2.3.](#) Threats

Can be used for network mapping, and device fingerprinting.

##### [2.2.3.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

None.

#### [2.2.4.](#) Information Request or Information Reply Message (Deprecated)

These messages are described in [[RFC0792](#)] as "a way for a host to find out the number of the network it is on". [Section 3.2.2.7 of \[RFC1122\]](#) and [Section 4.3.3.7 of \[RFC1812\]](#) deprecate the use of these messages.

##### [2.2.4.1.](#) Information request message (type 15, code 0)

###### [2.2.4.1.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC0792](#)].

These messages are described in [[RFC0792](#)] as "a way for a host to find out the number of the network it is on". [Section 3.2.2.7 of \[RFC1122\]](#) and [Section 4.3.3.7 of \[RFC1812\]](#) deprecate the use of these messages.

###### [2.2.4.1.2.](#) Uses

###### [2.2.4.1.3.](#) Threats

###### [2.2.4.1.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

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#### [2.2.4.2.](#) Information reply message (type 16, code 0)

##### [2.2.4.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [\[RFC0792\]](#).

These messages are described in [\[RFC0792\]](#) as "a way for a host to find out the number of the network it is on". [Section 3.2.2.7 of \[RFC1122\]](#) and [Section 4.3.3.7 of \[RFC1812\]](#) deprecate the use of these messages.

##### [2.2.4.2.2.](#) Uses

##### [2.2.4.2.3.](#) Threats

##### [2.2.4.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

#### [2.2.5.](#) Address Mask Request or Address Mask Reply

##### [2.2.5.1.](#) Address Mask Request (type 17, code 0)

##### [2.2.5.1.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [RFC0950](#). [Section 3.2.2.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) includes a number of requirements regarding the generation and processing of this message.

[Section 3.2.2.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that a host MAY implement sending ICMP Address Mask Request(s) and receiving ICMP Address Mask Reply(s). [Section 4.3.3.9 of \[RFC1812\]](#) states that a router MUST implement support for receiving ICMP Address Mask Request messages and responding with ICMP Address Mask Reply messages.

##### [2.2.5.1.2.](#) Uses

Was originally defined as a means for system stateless autoconfiguration.

##### [2.2.5.1.3.](#) Threats

Can be used for network mapping, and OS fingerprinting.

#### [2.2.5.1.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

None.

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#### [2.2.5.2.](#) Address Mask Reply (type 18, code 0)

##### [2.2.5.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [RFC0950](#). [Section 3.2.2.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) includes a number of requirements regarding the generation and processing of this message.

[Section 3.2.2.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) states that a host MAY implement sending ICMP Address Mask Request(s) and receiving ICMP Address Mask Reply(s). [Section 4.3.3.9 of \[RFC1812\]](#) states that a router MUST implement support for receiving ICMP Address Mask Request messages and responding with ICMP Address Mask Reply messages.

##### [2.2.5.2.2.](#) Uses

Was originally defined as a means for system stateless autoconfiguration.

##### [2.2.5.2.3.](#) Threats

Can be used for network mapping, and OS fingerprinting.

#### [2.2.5.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

None.

### [3.](#) Internet Control Message Protocol version 6 (ICMPv6)

#### [3.1.](#) ICMPv6 error messages

The ICMPv6 specification leaves it up to the implementation the reaction to ICMP error messages. Therefore, the ICMP attacks described in [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-icmp-attacks](#)] might or might not be

effective.

### [3.1.1.](#) Destination Unreachable (Type 1)

#### [3.1.1.1.](#) No route to destination (code 0)

##### [3.1.1.1.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

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##### [3.1.1.1.2.](#) Uses

##### [3.1.1.1.3.](#) Threats

##### [3.1.1.1.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [3.1.1.2.](#) Communication with destination administratively prohibited (code 1)

##### [3.1.1.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

##### [3.1.1.2.2.](#) Uses

##### [3.1.1.2.3.](#) Threats

##### [3.1.1.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

[3.1.1.3.](#) Beyond scope of source address (code 2)

[3.1.1.3.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

[3.1.1.3.2.](#) Uses

[3.1.1.3.3.](#) Threats

[3.1.1.3.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

[3.1.1.4.](#) Address unreachable (code 3)

[3.1.1.4.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

[3.1.1.4.2.](#) Uses

[3.1.1.4.3.](#) Threats

[3.1.1.4.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

[3.1.1.5.](#) Port unreachable (code 4)

[3.1.1.5.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

#### [3.1.1.5.2.](#) Uses

#### [3.1.1.5.3.](#) Threats

This error message might used to perform Denial of Service (DoS) attacks against transport protocols. [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-icmp-attacks](#)] describes the use of this error message to attack TCP connections.

#### [3.1.1.5.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [3.1.1.6.](#) Source address failed ingress/egress policy (code 5)

##### [3.1.1.6.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

##### [3.1.1.6.2.](#) Uses

##### [3.1.1.6.3.](#) Threats

##### [3.1.1.6.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

#### [3.1.1.7.](#) Reject route to destination (code 6)

##### [3.1.1.7.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

[3.1.1.7.2.](#) Uses

[3.1.1.7.3.](#) Threats

[3.1.1.7.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

[3.1.2.](#) Packet Too Big Message (Type 2, code 0)

[3.1.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

[3.1.2.2.](#) Uses

Used for the Path-MTU discovery mechanism for IPv6 defined in [[RFC1981](#)].

[3.1.2.3.](#) Threats

This error message can be used to perform Denial of Service (DoS) attacks against transport protocols. [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-icmp-attacks](#)] describes the use of this error message to attack TCP connections.

[3.1.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

Filtering this error message will break the Path-MTU Discovery mechanism defined in [[RFC1981](#)].

[3.1.3.](#) Time Exceeded Message (Type 3)

[3.1.3.1.](#) Hop limit exceeded in transit (code 0)

[3.1.3.1.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].



[3.1.3.1.2.](#) Uses

[3.1.3.1.3.](#) Threats

[3.1.3.1.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

[3.1.3.2.](#) Fragment reassembly time exceeded (code 1)

[3.1.3.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

[3.1.3.2.2.](#) Uses

Used to signal a timeout in fragment reassembly.

[3.1.3.2.3.](#) Threats

May reveal the timeout value used by a system for fragment reassembly.

[3.1.3.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

May lead to long delays between connection establishment attempts or long response times that could have been avoided by aborting non-synchronized connections in response to ICMP soft errors [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-tcp-soft-errors](#)].

[3.1.4.](#) Parameter Problem Message (Type 4)

[3.1.4.1.](#) Erroneous header field encountered (code 0)

#### [3.1.4.1.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

#### [3.1.4.1.2.](#) Uses

#### [3.1.4.1.3.](#) Threats

This error message might used to perform Denial of Service (DoS) attacks against transport protocols. [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-icmp-attacks](#)] describes the use of this error message to attack TCP connections.

#### [3.1.4.1.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

### [3.1.4.2.](#) Unrecognized Next Header type encountered (code 1)

#### [3.1.4.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

#### [3.1.4.2.2.](#) Uses

#### [3.1.4.2.3.](#) Threats

This error message might used to perform Denial of Service (DoS) attacks against transport protocols. [[I-D.ietf-tcpm-icmp-attacks](#)] describes the use of this error message to attack TCP connections.

#### [3.1.4.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

### [3.1.4.3.](#) Unrecognized IPv6 option encountered (code 2)

#### [3.1.4.3.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

#### [3.1.4.3.2.](#) Uses

#### [3.1.4.3.3.](#) Threats

#### [3.1.4.3.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

### [3.1.5.](#) Private experimentation (Type 100)

#### [3.1.5.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

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[3.1.5.2.](#) Uses

[3.1.5.3.](#) Threats

[3.1.5.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

[3.1.6.](#) Private experimentation (Type 101)

[3.1.6.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

[3.1.6.2.](#) Uses

[3.1.6.3.](#) Threats

[3.1.6.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

[3.1.7.](#) Reserved for expansion of ICMPv6 error messages (Type 127)

[3.1.7.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

[3.1.7.2.](#) Uses

[3.1.7.3.](#) Threats

[3.1.7.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

[3.2.](#) ICMPv6 Informational messages

[3.2.1.](#) Echo Request or Echo Reply Message

[3.2.1.1.](#) Echo Request message (type 128, code 0)

[3.2.1.1.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

[3.2.1.1.2.](#) Uses

Used by the ping tool to test reachability.

### [3.2.1.1.3.](#) Threats

Can be used for network mapping [[icmp-scanning](#)] and for performing Smurf DoS attacks [[smurf](#)].

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### [3.2.1.1.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

Filtering this error message will break the ping tool. The best current practice is to rate-limit this ICMP message.

### [3.2.1.2.](#) Echo reply message (Type 129, code 0)

#### [3.2.1.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

#### [3.2.1.2.2.](#) Uses

Used by the ping tool to test reachability.

#### [3.2.1.2.3.](#) Threats

Can be used for network mapping [[icmp-scanning](#)] and for performing Smurf DoS attacks [[smurf](#)].

#### [3.2.1.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

Filtering this error message will break the ping tool. The best current practice is to rate-limit this ICMP message.

### [3.2.2.](#) Private experimentation (Type 200)

#### [3.2.2.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

#### [3.2.2.2.](#) Uses

#### [3.2.2.3.](#) Threats

#### [3.2.2.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

### [3.2.3.](#) Private experimentation (Type 201)

#### [3.2.3.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

#### [3.2.3.2.](#) Uses

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#### [3.2.3.3.](#) Threats

#### [3.2.3.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

### [3.2.4.](#) Reserved for expansion of ICMPv6 informational messages (Type 255)

#### [3.2.4.1.](#) Message specification

Defined in [[RFC4443](#)].

#### [3.2.4.2.](#) Uses

#### [3.2.4.3.](#) Threats

#### [3.2.4.4.](#) Operational/interoperability impact if blocked

## [4.](#) Security Considerations

This document does not introduce any new security implications. It attempts to help mitigate security threats that rely on ICMP through packet filtering and rate-limiting.

## [5.](#) Acknowledgements

This survey of ICMP specifications is based on a yet-to-be-published internet-draft on ICMP by Fernando Gont and Carlos Pignataro. This

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Fernando would like to thank Paula Piedra for her love and support.

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[Appendix A](#). Change log (to be removed before publication of the  
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