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J. Lennox  
D. Hong  
Vidyo  
J. Uberti  
S. Holmer  
M. Flodman  
Google  
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**The Layer Refresh Request (LRR) RTCP Feedback Message**  
**draft-ietf-avtext-lrr-06**

**Abstract**

This memo describes the RTCP Payload-Specific Feedback Message "Layer Refresh Request" (LRR), which can be used to request a state refresh of one or more substreams of a layered media stream. It also defines its use with several RTP payloads for scalable media formats.

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## [1.](#) Introduction

This memo describes an RTCP [[RFC3550](#)] Payload-Specific Feedback Message [[RFC4585](#)] "Layer Refresh Request" (LRR). It is designed to allow a receiver of a layered media stream to request that one or more of its substreams be refreshed, such that it can then be decoded by an endpoint which previously was not receiving those layers, without requiring that the entire stream be refreshed (as it would be if the receiver sent a Full Intra Request (FIR); [[RFC5104](#)] see also [[RFC8082](#)]).

The feedback message is applicable both to temporally and spatially scaled streams, and to both single-stream and multi-stream scalability modes.

## [2.](#) Conventions, Definitions and Acronyms

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 [[RFC2119](#)].



## 2.1. Terminology

A "Layer Refresh Point" is a point in a scalable stream after which a decoder, which previously had been able to decode only some (possibly none) of the available layers of stream, is able to decode a greater number of the layers.

For spatial (or quality) layers, layer refresh typically requires that a spatial layer be encoded in a way that references only lower-layer subpictures of the current picture, not any earlier pictures of that spatial layer. Additionally, the encoder must promise that no earlier pictures of that spatial layer will be used as reference in the future.

In a layer refresh, however, other layers than the ones requested for refresh may still maintain dependency on earlier content of the stream. This is the difference between a layer refresh and a Full Intra Request [[RFC5104](#)]. This minimizes the coding overhead of refresh to only those parts of the stream that actually need to be refreshed at any given time.

An illustration of spatial layer refresh of an enhancement layer is shown below.

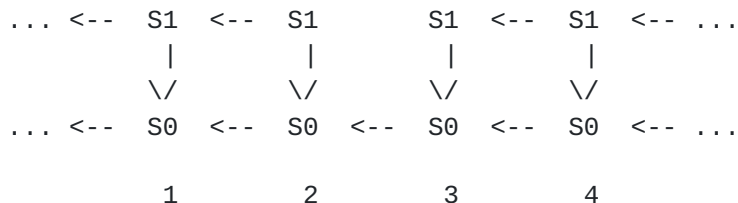


Figure 1

In Figure 1, frame 3 is a layer refresh point for spatial layer S1; a decoder which had previously only been decoding spatial layer S0 would be able to decode layer S1 starting at frame 3.

An illustration of spatial layer refresh of a base layer is shown below.

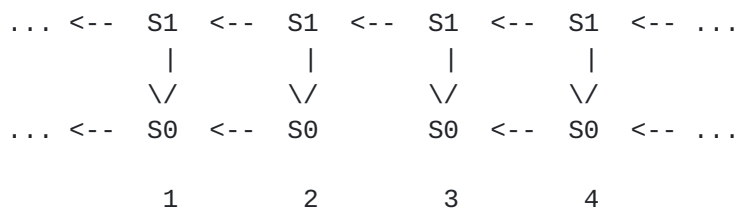


Figure 2



In Figure 2, frame 3 is a layer refresh point for spatial layer S0; a decoder which had previously not been decoding the stream at all could decode layer S0 starting at frame 3.

For temporal layers, layer refresh requires that the layer be "temporally nested", i.e. use as reference only earlier frames of a lower temporal layer, not any earlier frames of this temporal layer, and also promise that no future frames of this temporal layer will reference frames of this temporal layer before the refresh point. In many cases, the temporal structure of the stream will mean that all frames are temporally nested, in which case decoders will have no need to send LRR messages for the stream.

An illustration of temporal layer refresh is shown below.

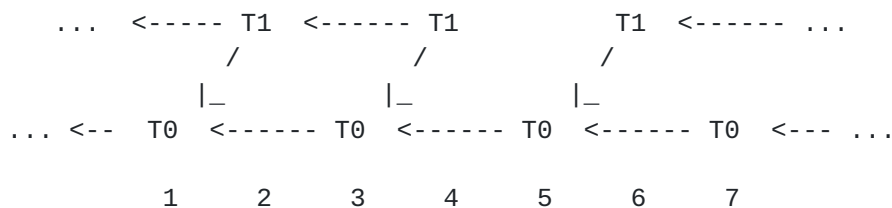


Figure 3

In Figure 3, frame 6 is a layer refresh point for temporal layer T1; a decoder which had previously only been decoding temporal layer T0 would be able to decode layer T1 starting at frame 6.

An illustration of an inherently temporally nested stream is shown below.

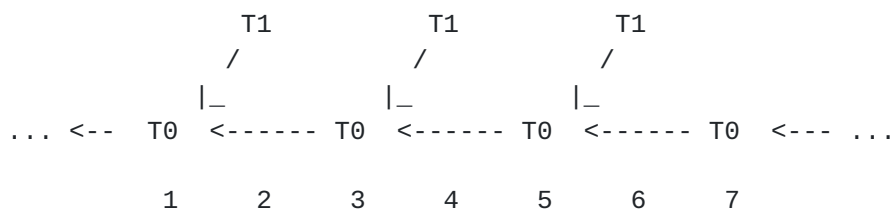


Figure 4

In Figure 4, the stream is temporally nested in its ordinary structure; a decoder receiving layer T0 can begin decoding layer T1 at any point.

A "Layer Index" is a numeric label for a specific spatial and temporal layer of a scalable stream. It consists of the pair of a "temporal ID" identifying the temporal layer, and a "layer ID" identifying the spatial or quality layer. The details of how layers



of a scalable stream are labeled are codec-specific. Details for several codecs are defined in [Section 4](#).

### 3. Layer Refresh Request

A layer refresh frame can be requested by sending a Layer Refresh Request (LRR), which is an RTP Control Protocol (RTCP) [[RFC3550](#)] payload-specific feedback message [[RFC4585](#)] asking the encoder to encode a frame which makes it possible to upgrade to a higher layer. The LRR contains one or two tuples, indicating the temporal and spatial layer the decoder wants to upgrade to, and (optionally) the currently highest temporal and spatial layer the decoder can decode.

The specific format of the tuples, and the mechanism by which a receiver recognizes a refresh frame, is codec-dependent. Usage for several codecs is discussed in [Section 4](#).

LRR follows the model of the Full Intra Request (FIR) [[RFC5104](#)] ([Section 3.5.1](#)) for its retransmission, reliability, and use in multipoint conferences.

The LRR message is identified by RTCP packet type value PT=PSFB and FMT=TBD. The FCI field MUST contain one or more LRR entries. Each entry applies to a different media sender, identified by its SSRC.

[NOTE TO RFC Editor: Please replace "TBD" with the IANA-assigned payload-specific feedback number.]

#### 3.1. Message Format

The Feedback Control Information (FCI) for the Layer Refresh Request consists of one or more FCI entries, the content of which is depicted in Figure 5. The length of the LRR feedback message MUST be set to  $2+3*N$ , where N is the number of FCI entries.

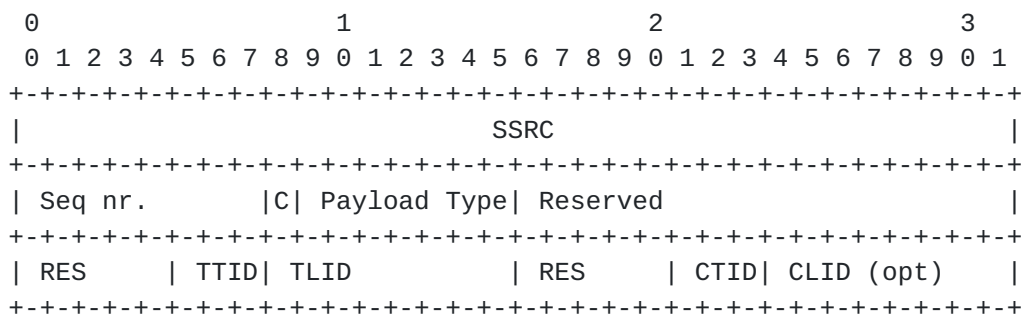


Figure 5





SSRC (32 bits) The SSRC value of the media sender that is requested to send a layer refresh point.

Seq nr. (8 bits) Command sequence number. The sequence number space is unique for each pairing of the SSRC of command source and the SSRC of the command target. The sequence number SHALL be increased by 1 modulo 256 for each new command. A repetition SHALL NOT increase the sequence number. The initial value is arbitrary.

C (1 bit) A flag bit indicating whether the "Current Temporal Layer ID (CTID)" and "Current Layer ID (CLID)" fields are present in the FCI. If this bit is 0, the sender of the LRR message is requesting refresh of all layers up to and including the target layer.

Payload Type (7 bits) The RTP payload type for which the LRR is being requested. This gives the context in which the target layer index is to be interpreted.

Reserved (RES) (16 bits / 5 bits / 5 bits) All bits SHALL be set to 0 by the sender and SHALL be ignored on reception.

Target Temporal Layer ID (TTID) (3 bits) The temporal ID of the target layer for which the receiver wishes a refresh point.

Target Layer ID (TLID) (8 bits) The layer ID of the target spatial or quality layer for which the receiver wishes a refresh point. Its format is dependent on the payload type field.

Current Temporal Layer ID (CTID) (3 bits) If C is 1, the ID of the current temporal layer being decoded by the receiver. This message is not requesting refresh of layers at or below this layer. If C is 0, this field SHALL be set to 0 by the sender and SHALL be ignored on reception.

Current Layer ID (CLID) (8 bits) If C is 1, the layer ID of the current spatial or quality layer being decoded by the receiver. This message is not requesting refresh of layers at or below this layer. If C is 0, this field SHALL be set to 0 by the sender and SHALL be ignored on reception.

When C is 1, TTID MUST NOT be less than CTID, and TLID MUST NOT be less than CLID; at least one of TTID or TLID MUST be greater than CTID or CLID respectively. That is to say, the target layer index <TTID, TLID> MUST be a layer upgrade from the current layer index <CTID, CLID>. A sender MAY request an upgrade in both temporal and spatial/quality layers simultaneously.



Note: the syntax of the TTID, TLID, CTID, and CLID fields match, by design, the TID and LID fields in [[I-D.ietf-avtext-framemarking](#)].

### **3.2. Semantics**

Within the common packet header for feedback messages (as defined in [section 6.1 of \[RFC4585\]](#)), the "SSRC of packet sender" field indicates the source of the request, and the "SSRC of media source" is not used and SHALL be set to 0. The SSRCS of the media senders to which the LRR command applies are in the corresponding FCI entries. A LRR message MAY contain requests to multiple media senders, using one FCI entry per target media sender.

Upon reception of LRR, the encoder MUST send a decoder refresh point (see [Section 2.1](#)) as soon as possible.

The sender MUST respect bandwidth limits provided by the application of congestion control, as described in [Section 5 of \[RFC5104\]](#). As layer refresh points will often be larger than non-refreshing frames, this may restrict a sender's ability to send a layer refresh point quickly.

LRR MUST NOT be sent as a reaction to picture losses -- it is RECOMMENDED to use PLI [[RFC4585](#)] instead. LRR SHOULD be used only in situations where not sending a layer refresh point would render the video unusable for the users.

## **4. Usage with specific codecs**

In order for LRR to be used with a scalable codec, the format of the temporal and layer ID fields (for both the target and current layer indices) needs to be specified for that codec's RTP packetization. New RTP packetization specifications for scalable codecs SHOULD define how this is done. (The VP9 payload [[I-D.ietf-payload-vp9](#)], for instance, has done so.) If the payload also specifies how it is used with the Frame Marking RTP Header Extension [[I-D.ietf-avtext-framemarking](#)], the syntax MUST be defined in the same manner as the TID and LID fields in that header.

### **4.1. H264 SVC**

H.264 SVC [[RFC6190](#)] defines temporal, dependency (spatial), and quality scalability modes.



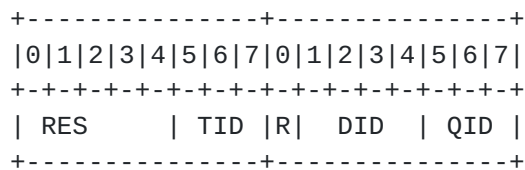


Figure 6

Figure 6 shows the format of the layer index fields for H.264 SVC streams. The "R" and "RES" fields MUST be set to 0 on transmission and ignored on reception. See [\[RFC6190\] Section 1.1.3](#) for details on the DID, QID, and TID fields.

A dependency or quality layer refresh of a given layer in H.264 SVC can be identified by the "I" bit (`idr_flag`) in the extended NAL unit header, present in NAL unit types 14 (prefix NAL unit) and 20 (coded scalable slice). Layer refresh of the base layer can also be identified by its NAL unit type of its coded slices, which is "5" rather than "1". A dependency or quality layer refresh is complete once this bit has been seen on all the appropriate layers (in decoding order) above the current layer index (if any, or beginning from the base layer if not) through the target layer index.

Note that as the "I" bit in a PACSI header is set if the corresponding bit is set in any of the aggregated NAL units it describes; thus, it is not sufficient to identify layer refresh when NAL units of multiple dependency or quality layers are aggregated.

In H.264 SVC, temporal layer refresh information can be determined from various Supplemental Encoding Information (SEI) messages in the bitstream.

Whether an H.264 SVC stream is scalably nested can be determined from the Scalability Information SEI message's `temporal_id_nesting` flag. If this flag is set in a stream's currently applicable Scalability Information SEI, receivers SHOULD NOT send temporal LRR messages for that stream, as every frame is implicitly a temporal layer refresh point. (The Scalability Information SEI message may also be available in the signaling negotiation of H.264 SVC, as the `sprop-scalability-info` parameter.)

If a stream's `temporal_id_nesting` flag is not set, the Temporal Level Switching Point SEI message identifies temporal layer switching points. A temporal layer refresh is satisfied when this SEI message is present in a frame with the target layer index, if the message's `delta_frame_num` refers to a frame with the requested current layer index. (Alternately, temporal layer refresh can also be satisfied by a complete state refresh, such as an IDR.) Senders which support



Figure 8





Figure 8 shows the format of the layer index field for H.265 streams. The "RES" fields MUST be set to 0 on transmission and ignored on reception. See [\[RFC7798\] Section 1.1.4](#) for details on the LayerId and TID fields.

H.265 streams signal whether they are temporally nested, using the `vps_temporal_id_nesting_flag` in the Video Parameter Set (VPS), and the `sps_temporal_id_nesting_flag` in the Sequence Parameter Set (SPS). If this flag is set in a stream's currently applicable VPS or SPS, receivers SHOULD NOT send temporal LRR messages for that stream, as every frame is implicitly a temporal layer refresh point.

If a stream's `sps_temporal_id_nesting_flag` is not set, the NAL unit types 2 to 5 inclusively identify temporal layer switching points. A layer refresh to any higher target temporal layer is satisfied when a NAL unit type of 4 or 5 with TID equal to 1 more than current TID is seen. Alternatively, layer refresh to a target temporal layer can be incrementally satisfied with NAL unit type of 2 or 3. In this case, given current TID = T0 and target TID = TN, layer refresh to TN is satisfied when NAL unit type of 2 or 3 is seen for TID = T1, then TID = T2, all the way up to TID = TN. During this incremental process, layer refresh to TN can be completely satisfied as soon as a NAL unit type of 2 or 3 is seen.

Of course, temporal layer refresh can also be satisfied whenever any Intra Random Access Point (IRAP) NAL unit type (with values 16-23, inclusively) is seen. An IRAP picture is similar to an IDR picture in H.264 (NAL unit type of 5 in H.264) where decoding of the picture can start without any older pictures.

In the (future) H.265 payloads that support spatial scalability, a spatial layer refresh of a specific layer can be identified by NAL units with the requested layer ID and NAL unit types between 16 and 21 inclusive. A dependency or quality layer refresh is complete once NAL units of this type have been seen on all the appropriate layers (in decoding order) above the current layer index (if any, or beginning from the base layer if not) through the target layer index.

## 5. Usage with different scalability transmission mechanisms

Several different mechanisms are defined for how scalable streams can be transmitted in RTP. The RTP Taxonomy [\[RFC7656\] Section 3.7](#) defines three mechanisms: Single RTP Stream on a Single Media Transport (SRST), Multiple RTP Streams on a Single Media Transport (MRST), and Multiple RTP Streams on Multiple Media Transports (MRMT).

The LRR message is applicable to all these mechanisms. For MRST and MRMT mechanisms, the "media source" field of the LRR FCI is set to



the SSRC of the RTP stream containing the layer indicated by the Current Layer Index (if "C" is 1), or the stream containing the base encoded stream (if "C" is 0). For MRMT, it is sent on the RTP session on which this stream is sent. On receipt, the sender MUST refresh all the layers requested in the stream, simultaneously in decode order.

## 6. Security Considerations

All the security considerations of FIR feedback packets [\[RFC5104\]](#) apply to LRR feedback packets as well. Additionally, media senders receiving LRR feedback packets MUST validate that the payload types and layer indices they are receiving are valid for the stream they are currently sending, and discard the requests if not.

## 7. SDP Definitions

[Section 7 of \[RFC5104\]](#) defines SDP procedures for indicating and negotiating support for codec control messages (CCM) in SDP. This document extends this with a new codec control command, "lrr", which indicates support of the Layer Refresh Request (LRR).

Figure 9 gives a formal Augmented Backus-Naur Form (ABNF) [\[RFC5234\]](#) showing this grammar extension, extending the grammar defined in [\[RFC5104\]](#).

```
rtcp-fb-ccm-param =/ SP "lrr"      ; Layer Refresh Request
```

Figure 9: Syntax of the "lrr" ccm

The Offer-Answer considerations defined in [\[RFC5104\] Section 7.2](#) apply.

## 8. IANA Considerations

This document defines a new entry to the "Codec Control Messages" subregistry of the "Session Description Protocol (SDP) Parameters" registry, according to the following data:

Value name: lrr

Long name: Layer Refresh Request Command

Usable with: ccm

Reference: RFC XXXX



This document also defines a new entry to the "FMT Values for PSFB Payload Types" subregistry of the "Real-Time Transport Protocol (RTP) Parameters" registry, according to the following data:

Name: LRR

Long Name: Layer Refresh Request Command

Value: TBD

Reference: RFC XXXX

## **9. References**

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## Authors' Addresses

Jonathan Lennox  
Vidyo, Inc.  
433 Hackensack Avenue  
Seventh Floor  
Hackensack, NJ 07601  
US

Email: [jonathan@vidyo.com](mailto:jonathan@vidyo.com)





Danny Hong  
Vidyo, Inc.  
433 Hackensack Avenue  
Seventh Floor  
Hackensack, NJ 07601  
US

Email: danny@vidyo.com

Justin Uberti  
Google, Inc.  
747 6th Street South  
Kirkland, WA 98033  
USA

Email: justin@uberti.name

Stefan Holmer  
Google, Inc.  
Kungsbron 2  
Stockholm 111 22  
Sweden

Email: holmer@google.com

Magnus Flodman  
Google, Inc.  
Kungsbron 2  
Stockholm 111 22  
Sweden

Email: mflodman@google.com

