

Internet-Draft  
Intended status: Standards Track  
Expires: 8 March 2017

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8 September 2016

Use of the Elliptic Curve Diffie-Hellman Key Agreement Algorithm  
with X25519 and X448 in the Cryptographic Message Syntax (CMS)

[<draft-ietf-curdle-cms-ecdh-new-curves-01.txt>](#)

## Abstract

This document describes the conventions for using Elliptic Curve Diffie-Hellman (ECDH) key agreement algorithm using curve25519 and curve448 in the Cryptographic Message Syntax (CMS).

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## 1. Introduction

This document describes the conventions for using Elliptic Curve Diffie-Hellman (ECDH) key agreement using curve25519 and curve448 [CURVE] in the Cryptographic Message Syntax (CMS) [CMS]. Key agreement is supported in three CMS content types: the enveloped-data content type [CMS], authenticated-data content type [CMS], and the authenticated-enveloped-data content type [AUTHENV].

The conventions for using some Elliptic Curve Cryptography (ECC) algorithms in CMS are described in [CMSECC]. These conventions cover the use of ECDH with some curves other than curve25519 and curve448 [CURVE]. Those other curves are not deprecated, but support for curve25519 and curve448 is encouraged.

When these two curves are used with with Diffie-Hellman key agreement, they are referred to as X25519 and X448.

### 1.1. Terminology

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 [STDWORDS].

### 1.2. ASN.1

CMS values are generated using ASN.1 [X680], which uses the Basic Encoding Rules (BER) and the Distinguished Encoding Rules (DER) [X690].

## 2. Key Agreement

In 1976, Diffie and Hellman describe a means for two parties to agree upon a shared secret value in manner that prevents eavesdroppers from learning the shared secret value [DH1976]. This secret may then be converted into pairwise symmetric keying material for use with other cryptographic algorithms. Over the years, many variants of this fundamental technique have been developed. This document describes the conventions for using Ephemeral-Static Elliptic Curve Diffie-Hellman (ECDH) key agreement using X25519 and X448 [CURVE].

The originator uses an ephemeral public/private key pair that is generated on the same elliptic curve as the public key of the

recipient. The ephemeral key pair is used for a single CMS protected content type, and then it is discarded. The originator obtains the recipient's static public key from the recipient's certificate [[PROFILE](#)].

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X25519 is described in [Section 6.1](#) of [CURVE], and X448 is described in [Section 6.2](#) of [CURVE]. Since curve25519 and curve448 have cofactors of 8 and 4, respectively, an input point of small order will eliminate any contribution from the other party's private key. As described in [Section 7](#) of [CURVE], implementations MAY detect this situation by checking for the all-zero output.

In [CURVE], the shared secret value that is produced by ECDH is called K. (In some other specifications, the shared secret value is called Z.) A key derivation function (KDF) is used to produce a pairwise key-encryption key from K, the length of the key-encryption key, and the DER-encoded ECC-CMS-SharedInfo structure [[CMSECC](#)].

The ECC-CMS-SharedInfo definition from [[CMSECC](#)] is repeated here for convenience.

```
ECC-CMS-SharedInfo ::= SEQUENCE {
    keyInfo          AlgorithmIdentifier,
    entityUInfo [0] EXPLICIT OCTET STRING OPTIONAL,
    suppubInfo [2] EXPLICIT OCTET STRING }
```

The ECC-CMS-SharedInfo keyInfo field contains the object identifier of the key-encryption algorithm and associated parameters. This algorithm will be used to wrap the content-encryption key. In this specification, the AES Key Wrap algorithm identifier has absent parameters.

The ECC-CMS-SharedInfo entityUInfo field optionally contains additional keying material supplied by the sending agent. Note that [[CMS](#)] requires implementations to accept a KeyAgreeRecipientInfo SEQUENCE that includes the ukm field. If the ukm field is present, the ukm is placed in the entityUInfo field. The ukm value need not be longer than the key-encryption key that will be produced by the KDF. When present, the ukm ensures that a different key-encryption key is generated, even when the originator ephemeral private key is improperly used more than once.

The ECC-CMS-SharedInfo suppPubInfo field contains the length of the generated key-encryption key, in bits, represented as a 32-bit number. For example, the key length for AES-256 would be 0x00000100.

## [2.1.](#) ANSI-X9.63-KDF

The ANSI-X9.63-KDF key derivation function is a simple construct based on a one-way hash function described in ANS X9.63 [[X963](#)]. This KDF is also described in Section 3.6.1 of [[SEC1](#)].

Three values are concatenated to produce the input string to the KDF:

1. The shared secret value generated by ECDH, K.
2. The iteration counter, starting with one, as described below.
3. The DER-encoded ECC-CMS-SharedInfo structure.

To generate a key-encryption key, generates one or more KM blocks, with the counter starting at 0x00000001, and incrementing the counter for each subsequent KM block until enough material has been generated. The KM blocks are concatenated left to right:

$$KM(i) = \text{Hash}(K \parallel \text{INT32}(\text{counter}=i) \parallel \text{DER}(\text{ECC-CMS-SharedInfo}))$$
$$\text{KEK} = \text{KM}(\text{counter}=1) \parallel \text{KM}(\text{counter}=2) \dots$$

KEK is the pairwise key-encryption key.

## [2.2.](#) HKDF

The HKDF key derivation function is a robust construct based on a one-way hash function described in [RFC 5869](#) [HMAC]. HKDF is comprised of two steps: HKDF-Extract followed by HKDF-Expand.

Three values are used as inputs to the HKDF:

1. The shared secret value generated by ECDH, K.
2. The length in octets of the keying data to be generated.
3. The DER-encoded ECC-CMS-SharedInfo structure.

The ECC-CMS-SharedInfo structure includes the ukm. This field is optional, and if it is present, the ukm is also used as the HKDF

salt.

The length of the generated key-encryption key is used two places, once in bits, and once in octets. The ECC-CMS-SharedInfo structure includes the length of the generated key-encryption key in bits. The HKDF-Expand function takes an argument for the length of the generated key-encryption key in octets.

In summary:

```
if ukm is provided, then salt = ukm, else salt = zero
PRK = HKDF-Extract(salt, K)
```

```
KEK = HKDF-Expand(PRK, DER(ECC-CMS-SharedInfo), SizeInOctets(KEK))
```

KEK is the pairwise key-encryption key.

### [3.](#) Enveloped-data Conventions

The CMS enveloped-data content type [[CMS](#)] consists of an encrypted content and wrapped content-encryption keys for one or more recipients. The ECDH key agreement algorithm is used to generate a pairwise key-encryption key between the originator and a particular recipient. Then, the key-encryption key is used to wrap the content-encryption key for that recipient. When there more than one recipient, the same content-encryption key is wrapped for each of them.

A compliant implementation **MUST** meet the requirements for constructing an enveloped-data content type in Section 6 of [[CMS](#)].

A content-encryption key **MUST** be randomly generated for each instance of an enveloped-data content type. The content-encryption key is used to encrypt the content.

#### [3.1.](#) EnvelopedData Fields

The enveloped-data content type is ASN.1 encoded using the EnvelopedData syntax. The fields of the EnvelopedData syntax **MUST** be

populated as described in [[CMS](#)]; for the recipients that use X25519 or X448 the RecipientInfo kari choice MUST be used.

### 3.2. KeyAgreeRecipientInfo Fields

The fields of the KeyAgreeRecipientInfo syntax MUST be populated as described in this section when X25519 or X448 is employed for one or more recipients.

The KeyAgreeRecipientInfo version MUST be 3.

The KeyAgreeRecipientInfo originator provides three alternatives for identifying the originator's public key, and the originatorKey alternative MUST be used. The originatorKey MUST contain an ephemeral key for the originator. The originatorKey algorithm field MUST contain the id-ecPublicKey object identifier along with ECParameters as specified in [[PKIXECC](#)]. The originator's ephemeral public key MUST be encoded using the type ECPoint as specified in [[CMSECC](#)]. As a convenience, the definitions are repeated here:

```
id-ecPublicKey OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= {
    iso(1) member-body(2) us(840) ansi-X9-62(10045) keyType(2) 1 }

ECPoint ::= OCTET STRING
```

```
ECParameters ::= CHOICE {
    namedCurve          OBJECT IDENTIFIER
    -- implicitCurve    NULL
    -- specifiedCurve   SpecifiedECDomain -- }
```

The object identifiers for X25519 and X448 have been assigned in [[ID.curdle-pkix](#)]. They are repeated below for convenience.

When using X25519, the ECPoint contains exactly 32 octets, and the ECParameters namedCurve MUST contain the following object identifier:

```
id-X25519 OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= { 1.3.101.110 }
```

When using X448, the ECPoint contains exactly 56 octets, and the ECParameters namedCurve MUST contain the following object identifier:

id-X448 OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= { 1.3.101.111 }

KeyAgreeRecipientInfo ukm is optional. Note that [CMS] requires implementations to accept a KeyAgreeRecipientInfo SEQUENCE that includes the ukm field. If present, the ukm is placed in the entityUIInfo field of the ECC-CMS-SharedInfo as input to the KDF. The ukm value need not be longer than the key-encryption key produced by the KDF.

KeyAgreeRecipientInfo keyEncryptionAlgorithm MUST contain the object identifier of the key-encryption algorithm that will be used to wrap the content-encryption key. The conventions for using AES-128, AES-192, and AES-256 in the key wrap mode are specified in [CMSAES].

KeyAgreeRecipientInfo recipientEncryptedKeys includes a recipient identifier and encrypted key for one or more recipients. The RecipientEncryptedKey KeyAgreeRecipientIdentifier MUST contain either the issuerAndSerialNumber identifying the recipient's certificate or the RecipientKeyIdentifier containing the subject key identifier from the recipient's certificate. In both cases, the recipient's certificate contains the recipient's static X25519 or X448 public key. RecipientEncryptedKey EncryptedKey MUST contain the content-encryption key encrypted with the pairwise key-encryption key using the algorithm specified by the KeyWrapAlgorithm.

#### 4. Authenticated-data Conventions

The CMS authenticated-data content type [CMS] consists an authenticated content, a message authentication code (MAC), and encrypted authentication keys for one or more recipients. The ECDH key agreement algorithm is used to generate a pairwise key-encryption key between the originator and a particular recipient. Then, the

key-encryption key is used to wrap the authentication key for that recipient. When there more than one recipient, the same authentication key is wrapped for each of them.

A compliant implementation MUST meet the requirements for constructing an authenticated-data content type in Section 9 of [CMS].

A authentication key MUST be randomly generated for each instance of an authenticated-data content type. The authentication key is used to compute the MAC over the content.

#### [4.1.](#) AuthenticatedData Fields

The authenticated-data content type is ASN.1 encoded using the AuthenticatedData syntax. The fields of the AuthenticatedData syntax MUST be populated as described in [\[CMS\]](#); for the recipients that use X25519 or X448 the RecipientInfo kari choice MUST be used.

#### [4.2.](#) KeyAgreeRecipientInfo Fields

The fields of the KeyAgreeRecipientInfo syntax MUST be populated as described in [Section 3.2](#) of this document.

### [5.](#) Authenticated-Enveloped-data Conventions

The CMS authenticated-enveloped-data content type content type [\[AUTHENV\]](#) consists of an authenticated and encrypted content and encrypted content-authenticated-encryption keys for one or more recipients. The ECDH key agreement algorithm is used to generate a pairwise key-encryption key between the originator and a particular recipient. Then, the key-encryption key is used to wrap the content-authenticated-encryption key for that recipient. When there more than one recipient, the same content-authenticated-encryption key is wrapped for each of them.

A compliant implementation MUST meet the requirements for constructing an authenticated-data content type in Section 2 of [\[AUTHENV\]](#).

A content-authenticated-encryption key MUST be randomly generated for each instance of an authenticated-enveloped-data content type. The content-authenticated-encryption key key is used to authenticate and encrypt the content.

#### [5.1.](#) AuthEnvelopedData Fields

The authenticated-enveloped-data content type is ASN.1 encoded using

the AuthEnvelopedData syntax. The fields of the AuthEnvelopedData

syntax MUST be populated as described in [AUTHENV]; for the recipients that use X25519 or X448 the RecipientInfo kari choice MUST be used.

## 5.2. KeyAgreeRecipientInfo Fields

The fields of the KeyAgreeRecipientInfo syntax MUST be populated as described in [Section 3.2](#) of this document.

## 6. Certificate Conventions

[RFC 5280](#) [PROFILE] specifies the profile for using X.509 Certificates in Internet applications. A recipient static public key is needed for X25519 or X448, and the originator obtains that public key from the recipient's certificate. The conventions in this section augment [RFC 5280](#) [PROFILE].

The id-ecPublicKey object identifier continues to identify the static ECDH public key for the recipient. The associated EcpkParameters parameters structure is specified in [PKIXALG], and the namedCurve alternative MUST be used. The object identifiers from [Section 3.2](#) of this document are used for X25519 and X448. The EcpkParameters parameters structure is repeated here for convenience:

```
EcpkParameters ::= CHOICE {
    ecParameters    EParameters,
    namedCurve      OBJECT IDENTIFIER,
    implicitlyCA    NULL }
```

The certificate issuer MAY use indicate the intended usage for the certified public key by including the key usage certificate extension as specified in Section 4.2.1.3 of [PROFILE]. If the keyUsage extension is present in a certificate that conveys an ECDH static public key, then the key usage extension MUST set the keyAgreement bit.

## 7. Key Agreement Algorithm Identifiers

The following object identifiers are assigned to indicate ECDH with HKDF using various one-way hash functions. These are expected to be used as AlgorithmIdentifiers with a parameter that specifies the key-encryption algorithm.

```
dhSinglePass-stdDH-hkdf-sha256-scheme OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= {
    TBD0 }
```

```
dhSinglePass-stdDH-hkdf-sha384-scheme OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= {
    TBD1 }
```

```
dhSinglePass-stdDH-hkdf-sha512-scheme OBJECT IDENTIFIER ::= {
    TBD2 }
```

## 8. SMIMECapabilities Attribute Conventions

A sending agent MAY announce to other agents that it supports ECDH key agreement using the SMIMECapabilities signed attribute in a signed message [[SMIME](#)] or a certificate [[CERTCAP](#)]. Following the pattern established in [[CMSECC](#)], the SMIMECapabilities associated with ECDH carries a DER-encoded object identifier that identifies support for ECDH in conjunction with a particular KDF, and it includes a parameter that names the key wrap algorithm.

The following SMIMECapabilities values (in hexadecimal) from [[CMSECC](#)] might be of interest to implementations that support X25519 and X448:

```
ECDH with ANSI-X9.63-KDF using SHA-256; uses AES-128 key wrap:
    30 15 06 06 2B 81 04 01 0B 01 30 0B 06 09 60 86 48 01 65 03 04
    01 05
```

```
ECDH with ANSI-X9.63-KDF using SHA-384; uses AES-128 key wrap:
    30 15 06 06 2B 81 04 01 0B 02 30 0B 06 09 60 86 48 01 65 03 04
    01 05
```

```
ECDH with ANSI-X9.63-KDF using SHA-512; uses AES-128 key wrap:
    30 15 06 06 2B 81 04 01 0B 03 30 0B 06 09 60 86 48 01 65 03 04
    01 05
```

```
ECDH with ANSI-X9.63-KDF using SHA-256; uses AES-256 key wrap:
    30 15 06 06 2B 81 04 01 0B 01 30 0B 06 09 60 86 48 01 65 03 04
    01 2D
```

```
ECDH with ANSI-X9.63-KDF using SHA-384; uses AES-256 key wrap:
    30 15 06 06 2B 81 04 01 0B 02 30 0B 06 09 60 86 48 01 65 03 04
    01 2D
```

```
ECDH with ANSI-X9.63-KDF using SHA-512; uses AES-256 key wrap:
    30 15 06 06 2B 81 04 01 0B 03 30 0B 06 09 60 86 48 01 65 03 04
    01 2D
```

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The following SMIMECapabilities values (in hexadecimal) based on the algorithm identifiers in [Section 7](#) of this document might be of interest to implementations that support X25519 and X448:

ECDH with HKDF using SHA-256; uses AES-128 key wrap:  
TBD

ECDH with HKDF using SHA-384; uses AES-128 key wrap:  
TBD

ECDH with HKDF using SHA-512; uses AES-128 key wrap:  
TBD

ECDH with HKDF using SHA-256; uses AES-256 key wrap:  
TBD

ECDH with HKDF using SHA-384; uses AES-256 key wrap:  
TBD

ECDH with HKDF using SHA-512; uses AES-256 key wrap:  
TBD

## 9. Security Considerations

Please consult the security considerations of [\[CMS\]](#) for security considerations related to the enveloped-data content type and the authenticated-data content type.

Please consult the security considerations of [\[AUTHENV\]](#) for security considerations related to the authenticated-enveloped-data content type.

Please consult the security considerations of [\[CURVES\]](#) for security considerations related to the use of X25519 and X448.

The originator uses an ephemeral public/private key pair that is generated on the same elliptic curve as the public key of the recipient. The ephemeral key pair is used for a single CMS protected content type, and then it is discarded. If the originator wants to

be able to decrypt the content (for enveloped-data and authenticated-enveloped-data) or check the authentication (for authenticated-data), then the originator needs to treat themselves as a recipient.

As specified in [CMS], implementations MUST support processing of the KeyAgreeRecipientInfo ukm field, so interoperability is not a concern if the ukm is present or absent. The ukm is placed in the entityUIInfo field of the ECC-CMS-SharedInfo structure. When present, the ukm ensures that a different key-encryption key is generated,

even when the originator ephemeral private key is improperly used more than once.

## 10. IANA Considerations

Three object identifiers for the Key Agreement Algorithm Identifiers in Sections 7 are needed. Are they going to come from an IANA registry or from the registry that assigned the object identifiers in [ID.curdle-pkix]?

## 11. Normative References

- [AUTHENV] Housley, R., "Cryptographic Message Syntax (CMS) Authenticated-Enveloped-Data Content Type", [RFC 5083](#), November 2007.
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- [X690] ITU-T, "Information technology -- ASN.1 encoding rules: Specification of Basic Encoding Rules (BER), Canonical Encoding Rules (CER) and Distinguished Encoding Rules (DER)", ITU-T Recommendation X.690, 2015.

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## 13. Acknowledgements

Thanks to Jim Schaad, Stefan Santesson, Sean Turner for their review and insightful suggestions.

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