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Deprecating RC4 in Secure Shell (SSH)
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Abstract

This document deprecates RC4 in Secure Shell (SSH). Therefore, this document formally moves to Historic [RFC4345](#).

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[1.](#) Introduction

The usage of RC4 suites (also designated as arcfour) for SSH are specified in [[RFC4253](#)] and [[RFC4345](#)]. [[RFC4253](#)] specifies the allocation of the "arcfour" cipher for SSH. [[RFC4345](#)] specifies and allocates the "arcfour-128" and "arcfour-256" ciphers for SSH. RC4 encryption has known weaknesses [[RFC7465](#)] [[RFC8429](#)], and the deprecation process should be begun for their use in Secure Shell (SSH) [[RFC4253](#)]. Accordingly, [[RFC4253](#)] is updated to note the deprecation of the RC4 ciphers and [[RFC4345](#)] is moved to Historic as all ciphers it specifies MUST NOT be used.

[1.1.](#) Requirements Language

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](#)][RFC 8174](#) [[RFC8174](#)] when, and only when, they appear in all capitals, as shown here.

[2.](#) Updates to [RFC 4253](#)

[[RFC4253](#)] is updated to prohibit arcfour's use in SSH. [[RFC4253](#)] allocates the "arcfour" cipher in [Section 6.3](#) by defining a list of defined ciphers where the "arcfour" cipher appears as optional as mentioned below:

arcfour	OPTIONAL	the ARCFOUR stream cipher with
		a 128-bit key

+-----+-----+-----+
The current document updates the status of the "arcfour" ciphers in the list of [\[RFC4253\] Section 6.3](#) by moving it from OPTIONAL to MUST NOT.

+-----+-----+-----+
| arcfour | MUST NOT | the ARCFOUR stream cipher with a 128-bit |
| | | key |
+-----+-----+-----+

[RFC4253] defines the "arcfour" ciphers with the text mentioned below:

The "arcfour" cipher is the Arcfour stream cipher with 128-bit keys. The Arcfour cipher is compatible with the RC4 cipher [\[SCHNEIER\]](#). Arcfour (and RC4) has problems with weak keys, and should be used with caution.

The current document updates [\[RFC4253\] Section 6.3](#) by replacing the text above with the following text:

The "arcfour" cipher is the Arcfour stream cipher with 128-bit keys. The Arcfour cipher is compatible with the RC4 cipher [\[SCHNEIER\]](#). Arcfour (and RC4) has known weaknesses [\[RFC7465\]](#) [\[RFC8429\]](#), and MUST NOT be used.

3. IANA Considerations

The IANA is requested to update the Encryption Algorithm Name Registry of the Secure Shell (SSH) Protocol Parameters [\[IANA\]](#). The Registration procedure is IETF Review which is achieved by this document. The registry should be updated as follows:

Encryption Algorithm Name	Reference	Note
arcfour	[RFC-TBD]	
arcfour128	[RFC-TBD]	
arcfour256	[RFC-TBD]	

Where TBD is the RFC number assigned to the document.

4. Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Eric Rescorla, Daniel Migault and Rich Salz.

5. Security Considerations

This document only prohibits the use of RC4 in SSH, and introduces no new security considerations.

6. References

6.1. Normative References

[RFC2119] Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels", [BCP 14](#), [RFC 2119](#), DOI 10.17487/RFC2119, March 1997, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc2119>>.

[RFC8174] Leiba, B., "Ambiguity of Uppercase vs Lowercase in [RFC 2119](#) Key Words", [BCP 14](#), [RFC 8174](#), DOI 10.17487/RFC8174, May 2017, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc8174>>.

6.2. Informative References

[IANA] "Secure Shell (SSH) Protocol Parameters: Encryption Algorithm Names", <<https://www.iana.org/assignments/ssh-parameters/ssh-parameters.xhtml#ssh-parameters-17>>.

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[RFC7465] Popov, A., "Prohibiting RC4 Cipher Suites", [RFC 7465](#),

DOI 10.17487/RFC7465, February 2015,
<<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc7465>>.

[RFC8429] Kaduk, B. and M. Short, "Deprecate Triple-DES (3DES) and RC4 in Kerberos", [BCP 218](#), [RFC 8429](#), DOI 10.17487/RFC8429, October 2018, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc8429>>.

[SCHNEIER]

Schneier, B., "Applied Cryptography Second Edition: protocols algorithms and source in code in C", , 1996, <SCHNEIER>.

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