

DHC Work Group  
Internet-Draft  
Intended status: Standards Track  
Expires: December 10, 2020

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June 8, 2020

DHCPv6 Prefix Delegating Relay  
draft-ietf-dhc-dhcpv6-pd-relay-requirements-01

## Abstract

Operational experience with DHCPv6 prefix delegation (PD) has shown that when the DHCPv6 relay function is not co-located with the DHCPv6 server function, issues such as timer synchronization between the DHCP functional elements, rejection of client's messages by the relay, and other problems have been observed. These problems can result in prefix delegation failing or traffic to/from clients addressed from the delegated prefix not being routed. Although [RFC8415](#) mentions this deployment scenario, it does not provide necessary detail on how the relay element should behave when used with PD.

This document describes functional requirements for a DHCPv6 PD relay when used for relaying prefixes delegated by a separate DHCPv6 server.

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This Internet-Draft will expire on December 10, 2020.

Internet-Draft

DHCPv6 PD Relay

June 2020

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[1.](#) Introduction

For Internet service providers that offer native IPv6 access with prefix delegation to their customers, a common deployment architecture is to have a DHCPv6 relay agent function located in the ISP's Layer-3 customer edge device and separate, centralized DHCPv6

server infrastructure. [\[RFC8415\]](#) describes the functionality of a DHCPv6 relay and [Section 19.1.3](#) mentions the deployment scenario, but does not provide detail for all of the functional requirements that the relay needs to fulfill to operate deterministically in this deployment scenario.

A DHCPv6 relay agent for prefix delegation is a function commonly implemented in routing devices, but implementations vary in their functionality and client/server inter-working. This can result in operational problems such as messages not being forwarded by the relay or unreachability of the delegated prefixes. This document provides a set of requirements for devices implementing a relay function for use with prefix delegation.

The mechanisms for a relay to inject routes (including aggregated ones), on its network-facing interface based on prefixes learnt from a server via DHCP-PD are out of scope of the document.

Multi-hop relaying is also not considered as the functionality is solely required by a DHCP relay agent that is co-located with the first-hop router that the DHCPv6 client requesting the prefix is connected to.

The behavior for handling unknown messages defined in [Section 19. of \[RFC8415\]](#) is also applicable for relay deployments.

## [2.](#) Terminology

### [2.1.](#) General

This document uses the terminology defined in [\[RFC8415\]](#), however when defining the functional elements for prefix delegation [\[RFC8415\]](#), [Section 4.2](#) defines the term 'delegating router' as:

"The router that acts as a DHCP server and responds to requests for delegated prefixes."

This document is concerned with deployment scenarios in which the DHCPv6 relay and DHCPv6 server functions are separated, so the term 'delegating router' is not used. Instead, a new term is introduced to describe the relaying function:

**Delegating relay** A delegating relay acts as an intermediate device, forwarding DHCPv6 messages containing IA\_PD/IAPREFIX options between the client and server. The delegating relay does not implement a DHCPv6 server function. The delegating relay is also responsible for routing traffic for the delegated prefixes.

Where the term 'relay' is used on its own within this document, it should be understood to be a delegating relay, unless specifically stated otherwise.

In CableLabs DOCSIS environments, the Cable Modem Termination System (CMTS) would be considered a delegating relay with respect to Customer Premises Devices (CPEs). A Broadband Network Gateway (BNG) in a DSL based access network may be a delegating relay if it does not implement a local DHCPv6 server function.

[RFC8415] defines the 'DHCP server', (or 'server') as:

"A node that responds to requests from clients. It may or may not be on the same link as the client(s). Depending on its capabilities, if it supports prefix delegation it may also feature the functionality of a delegating router."

This document serves the deployment cases where a DHCPv6 server is not located on the same link as the client (necessitating the delegating relay). The server supports prefix delegation and is capable of leasing prefixes to clients, but is not responsible for other functions required of a delegating router, such as managing routes for the delegated prefixes.

The term 'requesting router' has previously been used to describe the DHCP client requesting prefixes for use. This document adopts the [\[RFC8415\]](#) terminology and uses 'DHCP client' or 'client' interchangeably for this element.

## 2.2. Topology

The following diagram shows the deployment topology relevant to this document.

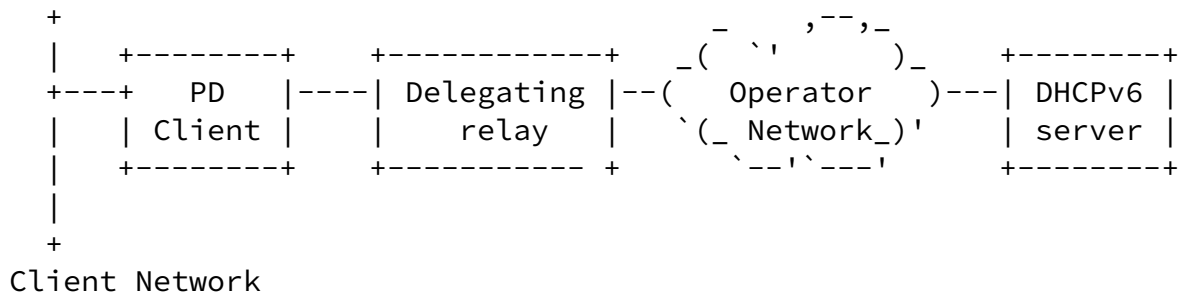


Figure 1

The client request prefixes via the client facing interface of the delegating relay. The resulting prefixes will be used for addressing the client network. The delegating relay is responsible for

forwarding DHCP messages, including prefix delegation requests and responses between the client and server. Messages are forwarded from the delegating relay to the server using multicast or unicast via the operator network facing interface.

The delegating relay provides the operator's Layer-3 edge towards the client and is responsible for routing traffic to and from clients connected to the client network using addresses from the delegated prefixes.

## 2.3. Requirements Language

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "NOT RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [BCP 14](#) [[RFC2119](#)] [[RFC8174](#)] when, and only when, they appear in all capitals, as shown here. This document uses these keywords not strictly for the purpose of interoperability, but rather for the purpose of establishing industry-common baseline functionality. As such, the document points to several other specifications (preferably in RFC or stable form) to provide additional guidance to implementers regarding any protocol implementation required to produce a DHCP

relaying router that functions successfully with prefix delegation.

### [3.](#) Problems Observed with Existing Delegating Relay Implementations

The following sections of the document describe problems that have been observed with delegating relay implementations in commercially available devices.

#### [3.1.](#) DHCP Messages not being Forwarded by the Delegating Relay

Delegating relay implementations have been observed not to forward messages between the client and server. This generally occurs if a client sends a message which is unexpected by the delegating relay. For example, the delegating router already has an active PD lease entry for an existing client on a port. A new client is connected to this port and sends a Solicit message. The delegating relay then drops the Solicit messages until it receives either a DHCP Release message from the original client, or the existing lease times out. This causes a particular problem when a client device needs to be replaced due to a failure.

In addition to dropping messages, in some cases the delegating relay will generate error messages and send them to the client, e.g. 'NoBinding' messages being sent in the event that the delegating relay does not have an active delegated prefix lease.

#### [3.2.](#) Delegating Relay Loss of State on Reboot

For proper routing of client traffic, the delegating relay requires a corresponding routing table entry for each active prefix delegated to a connected client. A delegating router which does not store this state persistently across reboots will not be able to forward traffic to client's delegated leases until the state is re-established through new DHCP messages.

#### [3.3.](#) Multiple Delegated Prefixes for a Single Client

[RFC8415] allows for a client to include more than one instance of OPTION\_IA\_PD in messages in order to request multiple prefix delegations by the server. If configured for this, the server supplies one (or more) instance of OPTION\_IAPREFIX for each received

instance of OPTION\_IA\_PD, each containing information for a different delegated prefix.

In some delegating relay implementations, only a single delegated prefix per-DUID is supported. In those cases only one IPv6 route for one of the delegated prefixes is installed; meaning that other prefixes delegated to a client are unreachable.

#### [3.4.](#) Dropping Messages from Devices with Duplicate MAC addresses and DUIDs

It is an unfortunate operational reality that client devices with duplicate MAC addresses and/or DUIDs exist and have been deployed. In this situation, the operational costs of locating and swapping out such devices are prohibitive.

Delegating relays have been observed to restrict forwarding client messages originating from one client DUID to a single interface. In this case if the same client DUID appears from a second client on another interface while there is already an active lease, messages originating from the second client are dropped causing the second client to be unable to obtain a prefix delegation.

It should be noted that in some access networks, the MAC address and/or DUID are used as part of device identification and authentication. In such networks, enforcing MAC address/DUID uniqueness is a necessary function and not considered a problem.

### [4.](#) Requirements for Delegating Relays

To resolve the problems described in [Section 3](#) the following section of the document describes a set of functional requirements for the delegating relay.

#### [4.1.](#) General Requirements

- G-1: The delegating router MUST forward messages bidirectionally between the client and server without changing the contents of the message.
- G-2: As described in [Section 16 of \[RFC8415\]](#), in the event that a received message contains a DHCPv6 option which the relay

does not implement, the message **MUST** be forwarded.

- G-3: The relay **MUST** allow for multiple prefixes to be delegated for the same client IA\_PD. These delegations may have different lifetimes.
- G-4: The relay **MUST** allow for multiple prefixes (with or without separate IA\_PDs) to be delegated to a single client connected to a single interface, identified by its DHCPv6 Client Identifier (DUID).
- G-5: If a device has multiple interfaces that implement a delegating relay function, the device **SHOULD** allow the same client identifier (DUID) to have active delegated prefix leases on more than one interface simultaneously, unless client DUID uniqueness is necessary for the functioning or security of the network. This is to allow client devices with duplicate DUIDs to function on separate broadcast domains.
- G-6: The maximum number of simultaneous prefixes delegated to a single client **MUST** be configurable.
- G-7: The relay **MUST** implement a mechanism to limit the maximum number of active prefix delegations on a single port for all client identifiers and IA\_PDs. This value **MUST** be configurable.
- G-8: It is **RECOMMENDED** that delegating relays support at least 8 active delegated leases per client device and use this as the default limit.
- G-9: The delegating relay **MUST** update the lease lifetimes based on the Client Reply messages it forwards to the client and only expire the delegated prefixes when the valid lifetime has elapsed.
- G-10: On receipt of a Release message from the client, the delegating relay **MUST** expire the active leases for each of the IA\_PDs in the message.



- R-1: The relay MUST maintain a local routing table that is dynamically updated with prefixes and the associated next-hops as they are delegated to clients. When a delegated prefix is Released or expires, the associated route MUST be removed from the relay's routing table.
- R-2: The relay MUST provide a mechanism to dynamically update access control lists permitting ingress traffic sourced from client delegated prefixes. This is to implement anti-spoofing as described in [[BCP38](#)].
- R-3: The relay MAY provide a mechanism to dynamically advertise delegated prefixes into an routing protocol as they are learnt. When a delegated prefix is released or expires, the delegated route MUST be withdrawn from the routing protocol. The mechanism by which the routes are inserted and deleted is out of the scope of this document.
- R-4: If the relay has an existing route for a delegated prefix via an interface, and receives ingress traffic on this interface with a destination address from the delegated prefix (not configured on the relay), then it MUST be dropped.

#### 4.3. Service Continuity Requirements

- S-1: In the event that the relay is restarted, active client prefix delegations will be lost. This may result in clients becoming unreachable. In order to mitigate this problem, it is RECOMMENDED that the relay implements either of the following:
- \* The relay MAY implement DHCPv6 bulk lease query as defined in [[RFC5460](#)].
  - \* The relay SHOULD store active prefix delegations in persistent storage so they can be re-read after the reboot.
- S-2: If a client's next-hop link-local address becomes unreachable (e.g., due to a link-down event on the relevant physical interface), routes for the client's delegated prefixes MUST be retained by the delegating relay unless they are released or removed due to expiring DHCP timers. This is to re-establish routing for the delegated prefix if the client next-hop becomes reachable without the delegated prefixes needing to be re-learnt.

- S-3: The relay MAY implement DHCPv6 active lease query as defined in [\[RFC7653\]](#) to keep the local lease database in sync with the DHCPv6 server.

#### [4.4.](#) Operational Requirements

- 0-1: The relay SHOULD implement an interface allowing the operator to view the active delegated prefixes. This SHOULD provide information about the delegated lease and client details such as client identifier, next-hop address, connected interface, and remaining lifetimes.
- 0-2: The relay SHOULD provide a method for the operator to clear active bindings for an individual lease, client or all bindings on a port.
- 0-3: To facilitate troubleshooting of operational problems between the delegating relay and other elements, it is RECOMMENDED that a time synchronization protocol is used by the delegating routers and DHCP servers.

#### [5.](#) Acknowledgements

The authors of this document would like to thank Bernie Volz for his valuable comments.

#### [6.](#) IANA Considerations

This memo includes no request to IANA.

#### [7.](#) Security Considerations

If the delegating relay implements [\[BCP38\]](#) filtering, then the filtering rules will need to be dynamically updated as delegated prefixes are leased.

[\[RFC8213\]](#) describes a method for securing traffic between the relay agent and server by sending DHCP messages over an IPsec tunnel. In this case the IPsec tunnel is functionally the server-facing interface and DHCPv6 message snooping can be carried out as described. It is RECOMMENDED that this is implemented by the delegating relay.

#### [8.](#) References

## 8.1. Normative References

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## 8.2. Informative References

- [BCP38] IETF, "Network Ingress Filtering: Defeating Denial of Service Attacks which employ IP Source Address Spoofing" <https://tools.ietf.org/html/bcp38>, [RFC 2827](#), [BCP 38](#).
- [RFC8213] Volz, B. and Y. Pal, "Security of Messages Exchanged between Servers and Relay Agents", [RFC 8213](#), DOI 10.17487/RFC8213, August 2017, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc8213>>.

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Expires December 10, 2020

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Internet-Draft

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June 2020

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