

Transport Area Working Group  
(tsvwg)  
Internet-Draft  
Updates: [792](#), [1122](#), [1812](#)  
(if approved)  
Intended status: Standards Track  
Expires: July 31, 2011

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January 27, 2011

Deprecation of ICMP Source Quench messages  
draft-ietf-tsvwg-source-quench-00.txt

## Abstract

This document formally deprecates the use of ICMP Source Quench messages by transport protocols, formally updating [RFC 792](#), [RFC 1122](#), and [RFC 1812](#). Additionally, it requests that the status of [RFC 1016](#) be changed to "Historic".

## Status of this Memo

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Internet-Draft

Deprecation of ICMP Source Quench

January 2011

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## Table of Contents

<a href="#">1.</a>	Introduction . . . . .	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">2.</a>	ICMP Source Quench messages . . . . .	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">3.</a>	Updating <a href="#">RFC 1122</a> . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">4.</a>	Updating <a href="#">RFC 1812</a> . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">5.</a>	General Advice to Transport Protocols . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">6.</a>	Changing the status of <a href="#">RFC 1016</a> Historic . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">7.</a>	Security Considerations . . . . .	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">8.</a>	IANA Considerations . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">9.</a>	Acknowledgements . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">10.</a>	References . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">10.1.</a>	Normative References . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">10.2.</a>	Informative References . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Appendix A.</a>	Survey of support of ICMP Source Quench in some popular TCP/IP implementations . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Appendix B.</a>	Changes from previous versions of the draft (to be removed by the RFC Editor before publishing this document as an RFC) . . . . .	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">B.1.</a>	Changes from <a href="#">draft-gont-tsvwg-source-quench-01</a> . . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">B.2.</a>	Changes from <a href="#">draft-gont-tsvwg-source-quench-00</a> . . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>
Author's Address	. . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>

## 1. Introduction

The ICMP specification [[RFC0792](#)] defined the ICMPv4 Source Quench message (type 4, code 0), which was meant as a mechanism for congestion control. ICMP Source Quench has been known to be an ineffective (and unfair) antidote for congestion, and generation of ICMP Source Quench messages by routers has been formally deprecated by [[RFC1812](#)] since 1995. However, reaction to ICMP Source Quench messages in transport protocols has never been formally deprecated.

This document formally deprecates reaction to ICMP Source Quench messages by transport protocols such as TCP, formally updating [[RFC0792](#)], [[RFC1122](#)], and [[RFC1812](#)]. Additionally, it requests that the status of [[RFC1016](#)] be changed to "Historic".

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. ICMP Source Quench messages

The ICMP specification [[RFC0792](#)] defined the ICMP Source Quench message (type 4, code 0), which was meant to provide a mechanism for congestion control. The Host Requirements RFC [[RFC1122](#)] stated in [Section 4.2.3.9](#) that hosts MUST react to ICMP Source Quench messages by slowing transmission on the connection, and further added that the RECOMMENDED procedure was to put the corresponding connection in the slow-start phase of TCP's congestion control algorithm [[RFC5681](#)].

[[RFC1812](#)] noted that research suggested that ICMP Source Quench was an ineffective (and unfair) antidote for congestion, and formally deprecated the generation of ICMP Source Quench messages by routers, stating that routers SHOULD NOT send ICMP Source Quench messages in response to congestion.

[RFC5927] discussed the use of ICMP Source Quench messages for performing "blind throughput-reduction" attacks, and noted that most TCP implementations silently ignore ICMP Source Quench messages.

We note that TCP implements its own congestion control mechanisms [[RFC5681](#)] [[RFC3168](#)], that do not depend on ICMP Source Quench messages.

Gont

Expires July 31, 2011

[Page 3]

---

Internet-Draft

Deprecation of ICMP Source Quench

January 2011

It is interesting to note that ICMPv6 [[RFC4443](#)] does not specify a "Source Quench" message.

### [3.](#) Updating [RFC 1122](#)

This document hereby updates [Section 3.2.2.3 of \[RFC1122\]](#) as follows:

A host SHOULD NOT send ICMP Source Quench messages.

If a Source Quench message is received, the IP layer MAY silently discard it.

[Section 4.2.3.9 of \[RFC1122\]](#) is updated as follows:

TCP SHOULD silently discard any received ICMP Source Quench messages.

### [4.](#) Updating [RFC 1812](#)

This document hereby updates [Section 4.3.3.3 of \[RFC1812\]](#) as follows:

A router SHOULD ignore any ICMP Source Quench messages it receives.

### [5.](#) General Advice to Transport Protocols

If a Source Quench message is received by a transport-protocol instance (e.g., a TCP connection), it SHOULD be silently ignored.

## 6. Changing the status of [RFC 1016](#) Historic

This document requests the RFC Editor to change the status of [\[RFC1016\]](#) to "Historic".

## 7. Security Considerations

ICMP Source Quench messages could be leveraged for performing blind throughput-reduction attacks against TCP and similar protocols. This attack vector, along with possible countermeasures, have been discussed in great detail in [\[RFC5927\]](#) and [\[CPNI-TCP\]](#). However, as noted in [\[RFC5927\]](#) and [\[CPNI-TCP\]](#), virtually all current versions of popular TCP implementations already silently ignore ICMP Source Quench messages.

Gont

Expires July 31, 2011

[Page 4]

---

Internet-Draft

Deprecation of ICMP Source Quench

January 2011

Silently ignoring ICMP Source Quench messages, as specified in this document, eliminates the aforementioned attack vector.

If deemed necessary, ICMP Source Quench messages could be filtered at firewalls.

## 8. IANA Considerations

This document has no actions for IANA. The RFC-Editor can remove this section before publication of this document as an RFC.

## 9. Acknowledgements

The author of this document would like to thank (in alphabetical order) Fred Baker, David Black, Scott Bradner, James Carlson, Antonio De Simone, Gorrry Fairhurst, Alfred Hoenes, Mahesh Jethanandani, Dan Wing, and Andrew Yourtchenko, for providing valuable feedback on earlier versions of this document.

This document has benefited from discussions within the TCPM Working

Group while working on [[RFC5927](#)].

## [10.](#) References

### [10.1.](#) Normative References

- [RFC0792] Postel, J., "Internet Control Message Protocol", STD 5, [RFC 792](#), September 1981.
- [RFC0793] Postel, J., "Transmission Control Protocol", STD 7, [RFC 793](#), September 1981.
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- [RFC1122] Braden, R., "Requirements for Internet Hosts - Communication Layers", STD 3, [RFC 1122](#), October 1989.
- [RFC1812] Baker, F., "Requirements for IP Version 4 Routers", [RFC 1812](#), June 1995.
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Gont

Expires July 31, 2011

[Page 5]

---

Internet-Draft

Deprecation of ICMP Source Quench

January 2011

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- [RFC5681] Allman, M., Paxson, V., and E. Blanton, "TCP Congestion Control", [RFC 5681](#), September 2009.

### [10.2.](#) Informative References

- [CPNI-TCP] CPNI, "Security Assessment of the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP)", 2009, <<http://www.cpni.gov.uk/Docs/tn-03-09-security-assessment-TCP.pdf>>.
- [FreeBSD] The FreeBSD Project, "<http://www.freebsd.org>".

- [Linux] The Linux Project, "<http://www.kernel.org>".
- [NetBSD] The NetBSD Project, "<http://www.netbsd.org>".
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- [OpenSolaris] OpenSolaris, "<http://www.opensolaris.org>".
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- [RFC5927] Gont, F., "ICMP Attacks against TCP", [RFC 5927](#), July 2010.

[Appendix A](#). Survey of support of ICMP Source Quench in some popular TCP/IP implementations

A large number of implementations completely ignore ICMP Source Quench messages meant for TCP connections. This behavior has been implemented in, at least, Linux [[Linux](#)] since 2004, and in FreeBSD [[FreeBSD](#)], NetBSD [[NetBSD](#)], OpenBSD [[OpenBSD](#)], and Solaris 10 since 2005. Additionally, OpenSolaris [[OpenSolaris](#)] has always shipped with support for ICMP Source Quench messages disabled.

[Appendix B](#). Changes from previous versions of the draft (to be removed by the RFC Editor before publishing this document as an RFC)

Gont Expires July 31, 2011 [Page 6]

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Internet-Draft Deprecation of ICMP Source Quench January 2011

[B.1](#). Changes from [draft-gont-tsvwg-source-quench-01](#)

- o Addresses nits and editorial changes suggested by Gorry Fairhurst.
- o Added the status of Solaris and OpenSolaris to [Appendix A](#).
- o Document resubmitted as [draft-ietf](#).

B.2. Changes from [draft-gont-tsvwg-source-quench-00](#)

- o This revision reflects the recent discussion about ICMP Source Quench messages on the tsvwg mailing-list. A detailed list of the changes is available at:  
<http://www.ietf.org/mail-archive/web/tsvwg/current/msg10407.html>

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