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IANA Procedures for Maintaining the Timezone Database  
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Abstract

ATTENTION: This memo contains a DRAFT proposal for the IANA to assume operational responsibilities relating to the management of the Timezone (TZ) Database. The authors seek comment and review of this proposal. No action will be taken without rough consensus of the TZ community.

The Timezone (TZ) Database consists of timezone information for all localities throughout the world. This database has been meticulously maintained and distributed free of charge by a group of volunteers, coordinated by a single volunteer who is now planning to retire. This memo specifies a DRAFT PROPOSAL for the IANA procedures involved with maintenance of the TZ database and associated code, including how to submit proposed updates, how decisions for inclusion of those updates are made, and the selection of a designated expert BY AND FOR the timezone community. The intent of this memo is, to the extent possible, document existing practice and provide a means to ease succession.

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## 1. Introduction

ATTENTION: This memo contains a DRAFT proposal for the IANA to assume operational responsibilities relating to the management of the Timezone (TZ) Database. The authors seek comment and review of this proposal. No action will be taken without rough consensus of the TZ community.

Since the early 1980s, a database that is in use on nearly all UNIX systems, Java systems, and other sorts of systems has been hosted at the National Institutes of Health. [[TZDB](#)] The database consists of both historic and current entries for geographies throughout the world. Associated with the database is a reference implementation of functions that can be used to convert time values.

The database has been maintained by volunteers that participate in a mailing list that is also hosted at the NIH. The database itself is updated approximately twenty times per year, depending on the year, based on information these experts provide to the maintainer. Arthur David Olson has maintained the database, coordinated the mailing list, and provided a release platform since the database's inception. With his retirement now approaching it is necessary to provide a

means for this good work to continue. The Internet community owes Arthur Olson and the volunteers on the tz mailing list a debt of gratitude.

The IANA provides registry services to the Internet community. Those

registries are coordinated by technical experts who are designated by the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG). The IANA is also well suited as a distribution platform for the TZ database itself.

The IETF has for quite some time had the capability to maintain non-working group mailing lists. The TZ mailing list would fit nicely just as such a list.

### 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](#) [[RFC2119](#)].

**TZ Database** The TimeZone Database, sometimes referred to as the Olson Database. This database consists of information about offsets from UTC for different localities, including daylight savings time (DST) transition information.

**TZ Coordinator** The person or people who maintain and manage release of the TZ Database. The TZ coordinator also has responsibility for maintaining the TZ mailing list. The TZ coordinator is a Designated Expert, as defined in [[RFC5226](#)].

**TZ mailing list** The forum where matters relating to the TZ database and supporting code are discussed.

The rest of this document specifies the following:

1. Transferring and maintenance of the TZ mailing list;
2. Procedures for selecting a technical expert for the technical expert who will play the role of coordinator, as well as release manager for the TZ database;
3. Procedures for updating the TZ database;
4. Maintenance and ownership of reference code; and
5. Ownership of the database.

## 2. The TZ Mailing List

For many years the TZ mailing list at the NIH has been the forum where discussion of changes to the TZ database and support files would take place. In addition, the TZ mailing list is used to announce releases of the database. Currently the TZ mailing list is administered by the TZ coordinator.

This list membership will be transitioned to the IETF mail server. The TZ coordinator will continue to manage the list, in accordance with rules of governance for non-WG mailing lists (including, for example, the commonly used "Note Well" statement). The list will be

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used just as it has been, to learn of, discuss, and confirm TZ definition changes, as well as an announcement list for new versions of the database. The TZ coordinator will continue to manage the list.

## 3. Making Updates to the TZ Database

Updates to the TZ database are made by the TZ coordinator in consultation with the TZ mailing list. TZ coordinator is empowered to decide, as the designated expert, appropriate changes, but SHOULD take into account views expressed on the mailing list.

The TZ coordinator will also decide the timing of database releases. The release itself today consists of several tar files that are downloaded from a well known location.

Moving forward, the TZ database is to be signed prior to release using a well known key, along with any appropriate supporting information and distributed from a well known location that is advertised by IANA in a manner of its choosing.

## 4. Selecting or Replacing a TZ Coordinator

From time to time it will be necessary to replace a TZ Coordinator. This could occur for a number of reasons:

- o The coordinator is retiring (as Arthur Olson is) or has announced

- o that he or she will be unable to continue to perform the function;
- o The coordinator is missing or has died;
- o The coordinator is not performing the function in accordance with community wishes.

In any of these cases, members of the community should raise the issue on the TZ list. If a rough consensus can be formed easily, and quickly, then the results should be presented to the IESG for comment and review. In keeping with [[RFC5226](#)], the IESG selects the TZ coordinator(s). The IESG MUST use rough consensus of the TZ mailing list as their primary guide to further action, when it exists. If the IESG determines that there is no rough consensus within the TZ community, the IESG will assign one of its members to develop that rough consensus on the TZ mailing list, and through whatever other means may be necessary. If rough consensus still cannot be developed after one month, at the discretion of the IESG, it MAY then choose a replacement TZ coordinator. The IESG is not an avenue for appeals of specific decisions of the coordinator, but rather a last resort when a coordinator is thought not to be functioning in an appropriate way.

N.B., the coordinator is a function, and may be filled by one OR MORE people, as the community sees fit.

## [5.](#) Maintenance and Distribution of Reference Code

Currently the maintainer of the TZ database also maintains reference code. This software is currently distributed under the BSD license. No change shall be made to the license without consultation and rough consensus of the community. IANA shall allow for the downloading of this reference code. The reference implementation shall be distributed along with an associated cryptographic signature of an identity that IANA shall publish.

## [6.](#) Database Ownership

It is the understanding of the IESG, ISOC, and IANA that the database itself is public domain. Certain portions of code currently distributed fall under the BSD license, and will be distributed as such. Should claims be made and substantiated against the database, the IANA will act in accordance with all competent court orders. No

further ownership claims will be made by IANA, the IETF Trust, or ISOC on the database.

## 7. IANA Considerations

The IANA will see that the role of TZ Coordinator is filled, based on the procedures described above. The IANA will act as a repository for the TZ database and associated reference code. The database coordinator will be named by the IESG as described above, and will act as the maintainer of the database and code, as described above. The IANA will provide the TZ coordinator with appropriate access to maintain the database, as well as necessary tooling that may be required, so long as no direct software costs are incurred. Both current and historical versions of the database will be stored and distributed via HTTP/HTTPS. IANA will be operationally responsible for the security of the system upon which the database resides.

The IANA will also maintain a cryptographic identity that is used to sign the database, and that will survive a change of coordinators.

## 8. Security Considerations

The distribution of the database is currently not secured. This memo states that moving forward the TZ database will be distributed with a

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valid cryptographic signature.

## 9. Normative References

[RFC2119] Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels", [BCP 14](#), [RFC 2119](#), March 1997.

[RFC5226] Narten, T. and H. Alvestrand, "Guidelines for Writing an IANA Considerations Section in RFCs", [BCP 26](#), [RFC 5226](#), May 2008.

[TZDB] Eggert, P. and A. Olson, "Sources for Time Zone and Daylight Saving Time Data",  
<<http://www.twinsun.com/tz/tz-link.htm>>.

[Appendix A](#). Changes

- o Initial Revision

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