

DNSOP  
Internet-Draft  
Intended status: Standards Track  
Expires: August 17, 2014

D. Migault (Ed)  
Orange  
February 13, 2014

**DNSSEC Validators Requirements**  
**draft-mglt-dnsop-dnssec-validator-requirements-00.txt**

Abstract

DNSSEC provides data integrity and authentication for DNSSEC validators. However, without valid trust anchor(s) and an acceptable value for the current time, DNSSEC validation cannot be performed. This document lists the requirements to be addressed so resolvers can have DNSSEC validation can be always-on.

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**1. Requirements notation**

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 [[RFC2119](#)].

**2. Introduction**

DNSSEC [[RFC4033](#)], [[RFC4034](#)], [[RFC4035](#)] adds data authentication and integrity checks to DNS [[RFC1034](#)], [[RFC1035](#)]. For signature validation, DNSSEC requires a valid trust anchor such as the Key Signing Key (KSK) (the Root Zone KSK for example) and an appropriated time.

Currently few effort have been made to describe mechanisms that guarantee how a DNSSEC validator can be provisioned with the appropriated KSKs and time so that DNSSEC validation can always be activated. A device that is badly configured or provisioned performing DNSSEC validation may result in disabling the DNS service of the device, and then most of its communications. As a results, non administrated devices that implement DNSSEC validation always need heuristics that disable the DNSSEC validation. This results in an implicit rule that can be stated as: "if DNSSEC validation is



performed correctly then do DNSSEC otherwise disable validation and switch to DNS". In a security point of view, this is unacceptable.

This document considers unmanaged devices performing DNSSEC validation and details scenarios where DNSSEC validation cannot be performed properly by the device. In other words, this means that FQDN properly signed are rejected. From these scenarios, this document derives requirements so DNSSEC Validators can have DNSSEC always activated.

### **3. Terminology**

This document uses the following terminology:

- DNSSEC Validator: the entity that performs DNSSEC resolution and performs signature validation.

### **4. Time derivation and absence of Real Time Clock**

With M2M communication some devices are not expecting to embed Real Time Clock (Raspberry Pi is one example of such devices). When these devices are re-plugged the initial time is set to January 1 1970. Other devices that have clocks that may suffer from time derivation. All these devices cannot rely on their time estimation to perform DNSSEC validation.

Requirement 1: DNSSEC validator MUST be provided means to appropriately update their time.

### **5. Unplugged devices during Trust Anchor KSKs roll over**

In this section we consider a regular Trust Anchor KSK roll over as described in [[RFC6781](#)] and [[RFC5011](#)]. Unlike regular KSKs, Trust Anchor KSK does not have to update the DS RRset in the parent zone. According to [[RFC6781](#)], if TTL\_K is the TTL associated to the Trust Anchor KSK and associated RRSIGs, the time of key roll over is around TTL\_K with double signed KSKs, and 2 x TTL\_K in the case of single signed KSK.

The Root Zone KSK is an example of Trust Anchor KSK and at the time of writing the KSK has a TTL of 172800 seconds which means 2 days. This means that 2 days would be sufficient to perform a Trust Anchor KSK roll over. [[RFC5011](#)] recommends to advertise the new / old key for 30 days. This means that a device unplugged for two months may not be aware of a regular Trust Anchor KSK rollover.

A DNSSEC validation may be properly configured by the manufacturer to perform DNSSEC validation. The device may for example be configured



by the manufacturer shipped to resellers that store the device for a few months, years before selling the devices to the final end user. Similarly, an operational device may be unplugged for a while for maintenance reason, or to be used as a fall back. This fall back is never expect to happen and may happens years after.

Suppose a KSK complete key roll-over occurs (for example at the Root Zone) while the device is offline. Once plugged again, the device will attempt to validate DNSSEC signature with the old Trust Anchor KSK.

The key point in this example is that the device is booted and does not rely on cached information.

Requirement 2: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to check the validity of their Trust Anchor KSKs.

Requirement 3: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to retrieve their Trust Anchor KSKs.

We think these requirements are not restrictive to the Root Zone KSK, but to any KSK. In fact 1) because it is not always possible to build a trusted delegation between the Root Zone and any sub zone. Then 2) the chain of trust between a zone and the root zone may not be always there. At last, 3) the DNS(SEC) resolution may be critical for infrastructure management. A company "Example" may for example address all its devices under the domain example.com and may not want disruption to happen if the .com delegation cannot be validated for any reason. Such companies may provision there DNSSEC Validator with the Trust Anchor KSK for the zone example.com in addition to the regular DNSSEC delegation.

Note that providing Trust Anchor KSKs is a crucial operation and can be used a vector of attack. As a result, this operation MUST be performed cautiously.

## **6. Emergency Key rollover**

By emergency key roll over, this paper designates any rollover that are not performed as described in [Section 4.1 of \[RFC6781\]](#) and that results in differences between data stored in the cache of the DNSSEC Validators and the authoritative servers (see [section 4.2 in \[RFC6781\]](#))

Emergency key roll over can be intentionally performed or result from a unexpected behavior in the publishing/validation chain. This is out of scope of this paper to understand the reasons/motivation for such key roll over. This document assumes such situation are likely



to happen and list the requirement so DNSSEC Validator can recover from such situations.

### **6.1. Invalid cached ZSK**

An emergency ZSK rollover may result in a new ZSK with associated new RRSIG published in the authoritative zone, while DNSSEC Validator may still cache the old value of the ZSK. For a RRset not cached, the DNSSEC Validator performs a DNSSEC query to the authoritative server that returns the RRset signed with the new ZSK. The DNSSEC Validator validates the signature with the old ZSK which results in an invalid signature check.

Suppose that the old ZSK has been corrupted and that old RRsets have been spoofed. Until the ZSK TTL expires, the DNSSEC Validator considers the spoofed RRsets as valid and the newly signed RRsets as invalid.

Requirement 4: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to be informed a ZSK MUST be flushed from cache.

Note that if the DNSSEC Validator receives an indication that a ZSK is not valid anymore, it is expected to flush its cache entries of the old ZSK as well as all entries that have been validated by the old ZSK. This does not lead to impersonation of ZSK, at most it generates some additional DNSSEC resolutions and validations.

### **6.2. Invalid cached RRSIG**

This would mean the DNSSEC Validator caches a new ZSK, but still has a RRset with a RRSIG signed with the old ZSK.

This situation should not happen as when a ZSK is renewed all RRsets validated by the old ZSK are flushed from the cache.

### **6.3. Invalid cached KSK**

Consequences of invalid KSK are similar to ZSK. None of the RRSIG can be validated even the one signing the ZSK. (cf. [Section 6.1](#))

Requirement 5: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to be informed a KSK MUST be flushed from cache.

### **6.4. Invalid DS**

The DS RRset is stored in the parent zone to build a chain of trust with the child zone. This DS RRset can be invalid because its RDATA





(KSK) is not anymore used in the child zone or because the DS is badly signed and cannot be validated by the DNSSEC Validator.

In both cases the child zone is considered as insecure and the valid child zone's KSK should become a Trust Anchor KSK.

Requirement 6: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to be informed a KSK SHOULD be trusted as a Trust Anchor KSK.

## **7. Invalid RRSIG**

A zone may have been badly signed, which means that the KSK or ZSK cannot validate the RRSIG associated to the RRsets. This may not be due to a key roll over, but to an incompatibility between the keys (KSK or ZSK) and the signatures.

Requirement 7: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to be informed that a KSK or a ZSK MUST NOT be used for RRSIG validation. Unlike "flushing", "MUST NOT be used" means the issue is not a synchronization issue, but that legitimate keys are invalid. Such Keys are known as Negative Trust Anchors [[I-D.livingood-negative-trust-anchors](#)].

This means that the zone for a given time will be known as "known insecure". The DNSSEC Validator is not expected to perform signature validation for this zone. It is expected that this information is associated to a Time To Live.

Note that, this information may be used as an attack vector to impersonate a zone, and must be provided in a trusted way, by a trusted party.

If a zone has been badly signed, the administrator of the authoritative DNS server may resign the zone with the same keys or proceed to an emergency key rollover. If the signature is performed with the same keys, the DNSSEC Validator may notice by itself that RRSIG can be validated. On the other hand if a key rollover is performed, the newly received RRSIG will carry a new key id. Upon receiving a new key id in the RRSIG, the DNSSEC Validator is expected to retrieve the new ZSK/KSK. If the RRSIG can be validated, the DNSSEC Validator is expected to remove the "known insecure" flag.

However, if the KSK/ZSK are rolledover and RRSIG cannot be validated, it remains hard for the DNSSEC Validator to determine whether the RRSIG cannot be validated or that RRSIG are invalid. As a result:

Requirement 8: The DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to be informed that a KSK or a ZSK is known "back to secure".



## **8. Private KSK**

DNS(SEC) authoritative server are expected to provide public data. Corporate networks or home networks may want to provide different views for their intranet and the public Internet. This was commonly known as "split-dns". This means that private networks like home networks or corporate networks will not be able to use DNSSEC on the private view.

Requirement 9: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to be provided KSK for private use.

In that case, the DNSSEC Validator may have two KSKs, one for the DNS public view and one for the private view.

## **9. Requirements**

The document lists the following requirements:

- Requirement 1: DNSSEC validator MUST be provided means to appropriately update their time.
- Requirement 2: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to check the validity of their Trust Anchor KSKs.
- Requirement 3: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to retrieve their Trust Anchor KSKs.
- Requirement 4: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to be informed a ZSK MUST be flushed from cache.
- Requirement 5: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to be informed a KSK MUST be flushed from cache.
- Requirement 6: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to be informed a KSK SHOULD be trusted as a Trust Anchor KSK.
- Requirement 7: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to be informed that a KSK or a ZSK MUST NOT be used for RRSIG validation.
- Requirement 8: The DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to be informed that a KSK or a ZSK is known "back to secure".
- Requirement 9: DNSSEC Validator MUST be able to be provided KSK for private use.



## **10. IANA Considerations**

There are no IANA consideration for this document.

## **11. Security Considerations**

There is no security consideration for this document.

## **12. Acknowledgment**

The need to address DNSSEC issues on the resolver side started in the Home Networks mailing list and during the IETF87 in Berlin. Among others, people involved in the discussion were Ted Lemon, Ralph Weber, Normen Kowalewski, and Mikael Abrahamsson. People involved in the email discussion initiated by Jim Gettys were, with among others, Paul Wouters, Joe Abley and Michael Richardson.

The current document has been initiated after a discussion with Paul Wouter and Evan Hunt.

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### **Appendix A. Document Change Log**

[RFC Editor: This section is to be removed before publication]

-00: First version published.

#### Author's Address

Daniel Migault  
Orange  
38 rue du General Leclerc  
92794 Issy-les-Moulineaux Cedex 9  
France

Phone: +33 1 45 29 60 52  
Email: [daniel.migault@orange.com](mailto:daniel.migault@orange.com)



