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draft-thomson-gendispatch-no-expiry-03
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Removing Expiration Notices from Internet-Drafts

Abstract

The long-standing policy of requiring that Internet-Drafts bear an
expiration date is no longer necessary. This document removes
requirements for expiration for Internet-Drafts from RFC 2026/BCP 9
and RFC 2418/BCP 25. In place of expiration, this document
introduces Internet-Drafts being labeled "active" and "inactive" in
the IETF tooling.

About This Document

This note is to be removed before publishing as an RFC.

The latest revision of this draft can be found at https://
martinthomson.github.io/no-expiry/draft-thomson-gendispatch-no-
expiry.html. Status information for this document may be found at
https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/draft-thomson-gendispatch-no-
expiry/.

Discussion of this document takes place on the General Area Dispatch
Working Group mailing list (mailto:gendispatch@ietf.org), which is
archived at https://mailarchive.ietf.org/arch/browse/gendispatch/.
Subscribe at https://www.ietf.org/mailman/listinfo/gendispatch/.

Source for this draft and an issue tracker can be found at https://
github.com/martinthomson/no-expiry.

Status of This Memo

This Internet-Draft is submitted in full conformance with the
provisions of BCP 78 and BCP 79.

Internet-Drafts are working documents of the Internet Engineering
Task Force (IETF). Note that other groups may also distribute
working documents as Internet-Drafts. The list of current Internet-
Drafts is at https://datatracker.ietf.org/drafts/current/.

Internet-Drafts are draft documents valid for a maximum of six
months and may be updated, replaced, or obsoleted by other documents
at any time. It is inappropriate to use Internet-Drafts as reference
material or to cite them other than as "work in progress."

This Internet-Draft will expire on 20 July 2024.

Copyright Notice

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The Content Guidelines for Internet Drafts [IDCG] requires that
Internet-Drafts include an expiration statement. Tooling and IETF
practice insist on Internet-Drafts including an expiry date 185 days
after their posting. After this expiration date, some systems might
display an Internet-Draft differently or not at all, with some
exceptions, such as when the document is under IESG review.

Some people believe that automatic expiration prevents the use of an
Internet-Draft for reference purposes, so that they do not become
stable references in other work. Some people believe that automatic

expiration encourages authors to update drafts that they wish to discuss. Originally, expired drafts were deleted from IETF servers completely; more recently, expiration only causes the document to be hidden from certain views or searches.

Copies of expired drafts are retained and can be obtained using other services. Expired drafts are routinely cited and referenced in various contexts, such as in IANA registries, academic papers, and informational references in RFCs. Thus, statements about it being inappropriate to cite drafts can lead readers not familiar with IETF processes to misunderstand how old drafts may used in practice.

This document does the following:

  *Updates [STD-PROCESS] to eliminate the removal of an Internet-
   Draft when the latest version is unchanged for more than six
   months.

  *Updates [WG] to eliminate the inclusion of an expiration date in
   Internet-Drafts.

  *Updates the Content Guidelines [IDCG] to remove references to
   expiration.

  *Updates the boilerplate text for Internet-Drafts to no longer
   include the "Expires:" field.

  *Introduces a status for Internet-Drafts which can be set to
   either "active" or "inactive" in tooling without specifying how
   this is implemented.

2. No More Expiration and Automatic Removal

The date of posting for an Internet-Draft is the best -- or perhaps only -- information available that can be added to a document the time of publication that might help readers understand whether the content is valid. Future events might invalidate the content virtually immediately; conversely, an Internet-Draft could also remain relevant for an arbitrarily long period of time.

2.1. Changes to Existing RFCs and Guidelines

RFC 2026 [STD-PROCESS] talks about removal of Internet-Drafts in the second paragraph of Section 2.2, which reads:

An Internet-Draft that is published as an RFC, or that has remained unchanged in the Internet-Drafts directory for more than six months without being recommended by the IESG for publication as an RFC, is simply removed from the Internet-Drafts directory. At any time, an

Internet-Draft may be replaced by a more recent version of the same
specification, restarting the six-month timeout period.

This paragraph is replaced with:

At any time, an Internet-Draft may be replaced by a more recent
version of the same specification.

RFC 2418 [WG] talks about header information in Internet-Drafts in
Section 7.2. The bullet point "- The expiration date for the I-D."
from that section is removed.

The Content Guidelines [IDCG] refers to boilerplate that will be
updated; see Section 2.2. Content Guidelines also says "A statement
specifying the expiry date of the Internet-Draft." This statement
and the description of how to specify the expiry date is removed.

2.2. Removing the Expires field from Internet-Drafts

This document specifies that the "Expires:" field be removed from
the header of submitted Internet-Drafts, and that the boilerplate be
amended as follows:

OLD:

   Internet-Drafts are draft documents valid for a maximum of six
   months and may be updated, replaced, or obsoleted by other
   documents at any time. It is inappropriate to use Internet-Drafts
   as reference material or to cite them other than as "work in
   progress."

NEW:

   Internet-Drafts are draft documents that may be updated,
   replaced, or obsoleted at any time. It is inappropriate to cite
   them other than as "work in progress."

3. Active and Inactive Status for Internet-Drafts

The tooling maintained by the IETF (such as the Datatracker) can
mark the latest version of a draft as "active" or "inactive". When a
new version of a draft is published, it is immediately marked as
"active", and all earlier versions of that draft are marked as
"inactive".

Other reasons that a draft might be marked "active" or "inactive"
are open, but will be informed by the communities that use Internet-
Drafts. Suggestions have already been made for automatically marking
drafts as "inactive" after a certain period of time, for allowing
working group chairs to control the marking for working group

drafts, for allowing documents targeting different streams (see
Section 5 of [RFC4844]) to be subject to stream-specific policies,
and for authors being able to change the status of their draft,
either to mark a draft that has been overcome by events as
"inactive" or mark a draft as "active" when there is renewed
interest.

3.1. Replacement Procedures

Originally, the expiration of a draft was intended to ensure that
the topic is disqualified from consideration. Updating a draft
before expiration was intended to indicate continued interest from
the authors.

Expiration was also used as a reminder to authors to update
documents. Without expiration, a substitute might be to provide a
note in advance of planned sessions. For instance, for an upcoming
session N+1, a reminder might be issued for drafts that have not
been updated in the interval between session N and session N+1, but
were updated between session N-1 and session N. The "active" and
"inactive" markings can also be used nudge authors to update drafts
before a meeting.

People might choose to concentrate their efforts on drafts that have
been recently updated. With "active" and "inactive" markings, those
people will have another indicator for which documents might be of
interest.

4. Referencing Internet-Drafts

Documents referencing Internet-Drafts should always include the two-
digit version number of the draft, unless there is a reason to refer
to the draft generically. For instance, when producing an Internet-
Draft it can be convenient to refer to another draft generically,
where document production tools ensure that the final artifact
refers to the most recent version.

The IETF Datatracker service maintains a stable archive of most
Internet-Drafts that is accessible by version. Using IETF
Datatracker URLs in references ensures the availability of the
referenced document.

5. Security and Privacy Considerations

This document has no direct implications on security or privacy.

6. IANA Considerations

This document makes no request of IANA.

7. References

7.1. Normative References

[IDCG]   "Content guidelines overview", 1 June 2022, <https://
             authors.ietf.org/en/content-guidelines-overview>.

[STD-PROCESS] Bradner, S., "The Internet Standards Process --
             Revision 3", BCP 9, RFC 2026, DOI 10.17487/RFC2026,
             October 1996, <https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc2026>.

[WG]   Bradner, S., "IETF Working Group Guidelines and
             Procedures", BCP 25, RFC 2418, DOI 10.17487/RFC2418,
             September 1998, <https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc2418>.

7.2. Informative References

[RFC4844]   Daigle, L., Ed. and IAB, "The RFC Series and RFC Editor",
             RFC 4844, DOI 10.17487/RFC4844, July 2007, <https://
             www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc4844>.

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