

Standard Electronic Mail Addresses For Internet Operations

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Abstract

This draft enumerates and describes standard electronic mail addresses to be used when contacting the operations personnel of an arbitrary domain.

As an operational standard, the recommendations herein pertain to vendors only inasmuch as their end user documentation should recommend that these mail addresses be aliased to appropriate end user personnel.

This document should be advanced as a Best Current Practice, since it describes what the current practice is and should be.

1 - Rationale and Scope

1.1. Several previous RFC documents have specified electronic mail addresses to be used when reaching the operators of the new service; for example, [RFC822 6.3, C.6] requires the presence of a <POSTMASTER@domain> address on all hosts that have an SMTP server.

1.2. Other protocols have defacto standards for well known addresses, such as <USENET@domain> for NNTP (see [[RFC977](#)]), and <WEBMASTER@domain> for HTTP (see [[HTTP](#)]).

1.3. Defacto standards also exist for well known addresses which have nothing to do with a particular protocol, e.g., <ABUSE@domain> and <TROUBLE@domain>.

1.4. The purpose of this draft is to collect all of these well known addresses in one place, add a few new ones, and ultimately recommend that IANA carry these addresses in future editions of its Defined Numbers periodical.

2 - Definitions and Invariants

2.1. The scope of a well known mail address is its domain name. Thus, the mail exchangers (see [[RFC974](#)]) for a domain must handle well known addresses even though some of these addresses might pertain to services not offered by the mail exchanger hosts. So, for example, if an NNTP server advertises the organization's top level domain in ``Path:'' headers (see [[RFC977](#)]), the mail exchangers for that top level domain must accept mail to <USENET@domain> even if the mail exchanger hosts do not serve the NNTP protocol.

2.2. A host is not required to run its own SMTP server, but every host that implements a protocol covered by a well known mail address should have an MX RRset (see [[RFC974](#)]) and the mail exchangers specified by this RRset should recognize this host's domain name as ``local'' for the purpose of accepting mail bound for a well known address. Note that this is true even if the advertised domain name is not the same as the host's domain name; for example, if an NNTP server's host name is DATA.RAMONA.VIX.COM yet it advertises the domain name VIX.COM in its ``Path:'' headers, then mail must be deliverable to both <USENET@VIX.COM> and <USENET@DATA.RAMONA.VIX.COM>.

2.3. For well known addresses that are not related to protocols, only the organization's top level domain name need be valid. For example, if an Internet service provider's domain name is NETCOM.COM, then the <ABUSE@NETCOM.COM> address must be deliverable, even though the customers whose activity generates complaints use hosts with more specific domain names like SHELL1.NETCOM.COM.

2.4. Well known addresses ought to be recognized independent of character case. For example, POSTMASTER, postmaster, Postmaster, PostMaster, and even PoStMaStEr should all be deliverable and should all be delivered to the same mailbox.

2.5. Most domains do not need the full set of well known addresses, since not every domain will implement the protocols or offer the service described by every well known address. If a given service is offered, then the relevant well known address(es) ought to be deliverable at all advertised domain names.

3 - Well Known Addresses

3.1. Protocol Related Addresses

Address	Protocol	Standard(s)
POSTMASTER	SMTP	[RFC821], [RFC822]
HOSTMASTER	DNS	[RFC1033], [RFC1034], [RFC1035]
USENET	NNTP	[RFC977]
WEBMASTER	HTTP	[HTTP]
UUCP	UUCP	[RFC976]
FTP	FTP	[RFC959]

3.2. Protocol Independent Addresses

Address	Operations Area	Example Usage
ABUSE	Customer Relations	Inappropriate public behaviour
NOC	Network Operations	Network infrastructure problem
SUPPORT	Customer Support	Product or service not working
SECURITY	Network Security	Security bulletins or queries

3.3. Optional, Less Well Known Addresses

Address	Purpose
NIC	DNS service (usually a synonym for HOSTMASTER)
WWW	HTTP service (usually a synonym for WEBMASTER)
NEWS	NNTP service (usually a synonym for USENET)
FTP-ADMIN	FTP service (usually a synonym for FTP)
LISTOWNER	Mailing list administration (prefer *-REQUEST)
TROUBLE	Network operations (usually a synonym for NOC)
ROUTING	Network operations (usually a synonym for NOC)
HELP	Customer service (usually a synonym for SUPPORT)
ROOT	Customer service (usually a synonym for SUPPORT)

4 - Other Well Known Addresses

4.1. Many mailing lists have an administrative address to which add/drop requests and other metaqueries can be sent. For a mailing list whose submission address is <LIST@DOMAIN>, the usual administrative address is <LIST-REQUEST@DOMAIN>. With the advent of list management software such as MajorDomo, this convention is becoming less common and its absence for any given mailing list should be treated as a standards violation. Make sure that your lists each have a *-REQUEST address and complain to remote POSTMASTERS when you discover remote lists without *-REQUEST addresses.

4.2. Several Internet registries implement mailing lists for Autonomous System contacts. So, for example, mail sent to <AS3557@RA.NET> will at the time of this writing reach the technical contact for Autonomous System 3557 in the BGP4 (see [[RFC1654](#)], [[RFC1655](#)] and [[RFC1656](#)]). Not all Autonomous Systems are registered with all registries, however, and so undeliverable addresses under this scheme should be treated as an inconvenience rather than as an error or a standards violation.

4.3. In DNS (see [[RFC1033](#)], [[RFC1034](#)] and [[RFC1035](#)]), the Start Of Authority record (SOA RR) has a field for specifying the mail address of the zone's administrator. This field should be a simple word without metacharacters (such as ``%`` or ``!`` or ``:``), and a transport level alias should be used on the relevant mail exchanger hosts to direct zone administration mail to the appropriate mailbox. For simplicity and regularity, it is hereby recommended that the well known address HOSTMASTER always be used.

5 - Security Considerations

Denial of service attacks (flooding a mailbox with junk) will be easier after this document becomes a standard.

6 - References

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[HTTP]

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7 - Acknowledgements

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