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Available Pool of Unallocated IPv4 Internet Addresses Now Completely Emptied

The Future Rests with IPv6

A critical point in the history of the Internet was reached today with the allocation of the last remaining IPv4 (Internet Protocol version 4) Internet addresses from a central pool. It means the future expansion of the Internet is now dependant on the successful global deployment of the next generation of Internet protocol, called IPv6.

The announcement was made by four international non-profit groups, which collaboratively work to coordinate the world's Internet addressing system and its technical standards.

At a news conference in Miami, Florida, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) joined the Number Resources Organization (NRO), the Internet Architecture Board (IAB) and the Internet Society in announcing that the pool of first generation Internet addresses has now been completely emptied.

The final allocation of Internet addresses was administered by the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA), which is a function of ICANN.

"This is a major turning point in the on-going development of the Internet," said Rod Beckstrom, ICANN's President and Chief Executive Officer. "No one was caught off guard by this. The Internet technical community has been planning for IPv4 depletion for some time. But it means the adoption of IPv6 is now of paramount importance, since it will allow the Internet to continue its amazing growth and foster the global innovation we've all come to expect."

The new Internet protocol, IPv6, will open up a pool of Internet addresses that is a billion-trillion times larger than the total pool of IPv4 addresses (about 4.3 billion), which means the number of IPv6 addresses is virtually inexhaustible for the foreseeable future.

Two "blocks" of the dwindling number of IPv4 addresses, about 33 million of them, were allocated earlier this week to the Regional Internet Registry (RIR) for the Asia Pacific region. When that happened, it meant the pool of IPv4 addresses had been depleted to a point where a global policy was triggered to immediately allocate the remaining small pool of addresses equally among the five global Regional Internet Registries.

The RIRs are independent, not-for-profit organizations that provide technical coordination for the infrastructure of the Internet.

Those last five blocks of IPv4 addresses were allocated to the five RIRs during a ceremony this morning in Miami during a meeting of the Regional Internet Registries.

The allocation of the final IPv4 addresses is analogous to the last crates of a product leaving a manufacturing warehouse and going to the regional stores or distributions centers, where they can still be distributed to the public. Once they are gone, the supply is exhausted. In this case, the RIRs will distribute the last IPv4 addresses to Internet Service Providers, universities, governments, telecommunications companies and other enterprises.

“It’s only a matter of time before the RIRs and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) must start denying requests for IPv4 address space,” said Raúl Echeberría, Chairman of the Number Resource Organization, the umbrella organization of the five RIRs. “Deploying IPv6 is now a requirement, not an option.”

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To read more about IPv6 go here: <http://www.atlarge.icann.org/issues/atlarge-briefs/ipv6-qanda-en.htm>

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Brad White
ICANN Director of Global Media Affairs
Washington, D.C.
Tel. +1 (202) 570 7118
brad.white@icann.org

Andrew Robertson
Edelman Public Relations
London, U.K.
Tel. + 44 (7811) 341 945
andrew.Robertson@edelman.com

About ICANN: *ICANN's mission is to ensure a stable, secure and unified global Internet. To reach another person on the Internet you have to type an address into your computer - a name or a number. That address has to be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN coordinates these unique identifiers across the world. Without that coordination we wouldn't have one global Internet. ICANN was formed in 1998. It is a not-for-profit public-benefit corporation with participants from all over the world dedicated to keeping the Internet secure, stable and interoperable. It promotes competition and develops policy on the Internet's unique identifiers. ICANN doesn't control content on the Internet. It cannot stop spam and it doesn't deal with access to the Internet. But through its coordination role of the Internet's naming system, it does have an important impact on the expansion and evolution of the Internet. For more information please visit: www.icann.org.*