Implementing NTP

Network Time Protocol (NTP) is a protocol designed to time-synchronize devices within a network. Cisco IOS XR software implements NTPv4. NTPv4 retains backwards compatibility with the older versions of NTP, including NTPv3 and NTPv2 but excluding NTPv1, which has been discontinued due to security vulnerabilities.

Information About Implementing NTP

NTP synchronizes timekeeping among a set of distributed time servers and clients. This synchronization allows events to be correlated when system logs are created and other time-specific events occur.

NTP uses the User Datagram Protocol (UDP) as its transport protocol. All NTP communication uses Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). An NTP network usually receives its time from an authoritative time source, such as a radio clock or an atomic clock attached to a time server. NTP distributes this time across the network. NTP is efficient; no more than one packet per minute is necessary to synchronize two machines to within a millisecond of each other.

NTP uses the concept of a “stratum” to describe how many NTP “hops” away a machine is from an authoritative time source. A “stratum 1” time server typically has an authoritative time source (such as a radio or atomic clock, or a GPS time source) directly attached, a “stratum 2” time server receives its time via NTP from a “stratum 1” time server, and so on.

NTP avoids synchronizing to a machine whose time may not be accurate, in two ways. First, NTP never synchronizes to a machine that is not synchronized itself. Second, NTP compares the time reported by several machines and does not synchronize to a machine whose time is significantly different than the others, even if its stratum is lower. This strategy effectively builds a self-organizing tree of NTP servers.

The Cisco implementation of NTP does not support stratum 1 service; in other words, it is not possible to connect to a radio or atomic clock (for some specific platforms, however, you can connect a GPS time-source device). We recommend that time service for your network be derived from the public NTP servers available in the IP Internet.

If the network is isolated from the Internet, the Cisco implementation of NTP allows a machine to be configured so that it acts as though it is synchronized via NTP, when in fact it has determined the time using other means. Other machines can then synchronize to that machine via NTP.

Several manufacturers include NTP software for their host systems, and a publicly available version for systems running UNIX and its various derivatives is also available. This software also allows UNIX-derivative

servers to acquire the time directly from an atomic clock, which would subsequently propagate time information along to Cisco routers.

The communications between machines running NTP (known as associations) are usually statically configured; each machine is given the IP address of all machines with which it should form associations. Accurate timekeeping is made possible by exchanging NTP messages between each pair of machines with an association.

The Cisco implementation of NTP supports two ways that a networking device can obtain NTP time information on a network:

- By polling host servers
- By listening to NTP broadcasts

In a LAN environment, NTP can be configured to use IP broadcast messages. As compared to polling, IP broadcast messages reduce configuration complexity, because each machine can simply be configured to send or receive broadcast or multicast messages. However, the accuracy of timekeeping is marginally reduced because the information flow is one-way only.

An NTP broadcast client listens for broadcast messages sent by an NTP broadcast server at a designated IPv4 address. The client synchronizes the local clock using the first received broadcast message.

The time kept on a machine is a critical resource, so we strongly recommend that you use the security features of NTP to avoid the accidental or malicious setting of incorrect time. Two mechanisms are available: an access list-based restriction scheme and an encrypted authentication mechanism.

When multiple sources of time (VINES, hardware clock, manual configuration) are available, NTP is always considered to be more authoritative. NTP time overrides the time set by any other method.

Configuring NTP

Configuring Poll-Based Associations

The following example shows an NTP configuration in which the router's system clock is configured to form a peer association with the time server host at IP address 192.168.22.33, and to allow the system clock to be synchronized by time server hosts at IP address 10.0.2.1 and 172.19.69.1:

```
ntp
  server 10.0.2.1 minpoll 5 maxpoll 7
  peer 192.168.22.33
  server 172.19.69.1
```

Configuring Broadcast-Based Associations

The following example shows an NTP client configuration in which interface 0/2/0/0 is configured to receive NTP broadcast packets, and the estimated round-trip delay between an NTP client and an NTP broadcast server is set to 2 microseconds:

```
ntp
 interface tengige 0/2/0/0
  broadcast client
  exit
broadcastdelay 2
```

The following example shows an NTP server configuration where interface 0/2/0/2 is configured to be a broadcast server:

```
ntp
 interface tengige 0/2/0/0
  broadcast
```

Configuring NTP Access Groups

The following example shows a NTP access group configuration where the following access group restrictions are applied:

Peer restrictions are applied to IP addresses that pass the criteria of the access list named peer-acl. Serve restrictions are applied to IP addresses that pass the criteria of access list named serve-acl.

Serve-only restrictions are applied to IP addresses that pass the criteria of the access list named serve-only-acl.

Query-only restrictions are applied to IP addresses that pass the criteria of the access list named query-only-acl.

```
ntp
  peer 10.1.1.1
  peer 10.1.1.1
  peer 10.2.2.2
  peer 10.3.3.3
  peer 10.4.4.4
  peer 10.5.5.5
  peer 10.6.6.6
  peer 10.7.7.7
  peer 10.8.8.8
  access-group peer peer-acl
  access-group serve serve-acl
  access-group serve-only serve-only-acl
  access-group query-only query-only-acl
  exit
ipv4 access-list peer-acl
  10 permit ip host 10.1.1.1 any
  20 permit ip host 10.8.8.8 any
  exit
ipv4 access-list serve-acl
  10 permit ip host 10.4.4.4 any
  20 permit ip host 10.5.5.5 any
  exit
ipv4 access-list query-only-acl
  10 permit ip host 10.2.2.2 any
  20 permit ip host 10.3.3.3 any
  exit
ipv4 access-list serve-only-acl
  10 permit ip host 10.6.6.6 any
  20 permit ip host 10.7.7.7 any
  exit
```

Configuring NTP Authentication

The following example shows an NTP authentication configuration. In this example, the following is configured:

NTP authentication is enabled.

Two authentication keys are configured (key 2 and key 3).

The router is configured to allow its software clock to be synchronized with the clock of the peer (or vice versa) at IP address 10.3.32.154 using authentication key 2.

The router is configured to allow its software clock to be synchronized with the clock by the device at IP address 10.32.154.145 using authentication key 3.

The router is configured to synchronize only to systems providing authentication key 3 in their NTP packets.

```
ntp
 authenticate
 authentication-key 2 md5 encrypted 06120A2D40031D1008124
 authentication-key 3 md5 encrypted 1311121E074110232621
 trusted-key 3
 server 10.3.32.154 key 3
 peer 10.32.154.145 key 2
```

Disabling NTP on an Interface

The following example shows an NTP configuration in which 0/2/0/0 interface is disabled:

```
ntp
 interface tengige 0/2/0/0
   disable
   exit
authentication-key 2 md5 encrypted 06120A2D40031D1008124
authentication-key 3 md5 encrypted 1311121E074110232621
authenticate
trusted-key 3
server 10.3.32.154 key 3
peer 10.32.154.145 key 2
```

Configuring the System as an Authoritative NTP Server

The following example shows a NTP configuration in which the router is configured to use its own NTP server clock to synchronize with peers when an external NTP source becomes unavailable:

```
ntp
  master 6
```

Updating the Hardware Clock

The following example shows an NTP configuration in which the router is configured to update its hardware clock from the software clock at periodic intervals:

```
ntp
  server 10.3.32.154
  update-calendar
```

Configuring NTP Server Inside VRF Interface

Note No specific command enables NTP; the first NTP configuration command that you issue enables NTP.

```
RP/0/RP0/CPU0:router# configure
RP/0/RP0/CPU0:router(config)# ntp
RP/0/RP0/CPU0:router(config)# ntp vrf Customer_A
RP/0/RP0/CPU0:router(config)# ntp vrf Customer_A source bvi 70
RP/0/RP0/CPU0:router(config-ntp)# end
```

```
or
RP/0/RP0/CPU0:router(config-ntp)# commit
```