Congestion Management Overview

Congestion management features allow you to control congestion by determining the order in which packets are sent out an interface based on priorities assigned to those packets. Congestion management entails the creation of queues, assignment of packets to those queues based on the classification of the packet, and scheduling of the packets in a queue for transmission. The congestion management QoS feature offers four types of queueing protocols, each of which allows you to specify creation of a different number of queues, affording greater or lesser degrees of differentiation of traffic, and to specify the order in which that traffic is sent.

During periods with light traffic, that is, when no congestion exists, packets are sent out the interface as soon as they arrive. During periods of transmit congestion at the outgoing interface, packets arrive faster than the interface can send them. If you use congestion management features, packets accumulating at an interface are queued until the interface is free to send them; they are then scheduled for transmission according to their assigned priority and the queueing mechanism configured for the interface. The router determines the order of packet transmission by controlling which packets are placed in which queue and how queues are serviced with respect to each other.

This module discusses the types of queueing and queueing-related features (such as bandwidth management) which constitute the congestion management QoS features:

- Weighted fair queueing (WFQ). Also known as flow-based WFQ in this module.

WFQ offers dynamic, fair queueing that divides bandwidth across queues of traffic based on weights. (WFQ ensures that all traffic is treated fairly, given its weight.) To understand how WFQ works, consider the queue for a series of File Transfer Protocol (FTP) packets as a queue for the collective and the queue for discrete interactive traffic packets as a queue for the individual. Given the weight of the queues, WFQ ensures that for all FTP packets sent as a collective an equal number of individual interactive traffic packets are sent.)

Given this handling, WFQ ensures satisfactory response time to critical applications, such as interactive, transaction-based applications, that are intolerant of performance degradation. For serial interfaces at E1 (2.048 Mbps) and below, flow-based WFQ is used by default.

- Class-based WFQ (CBWFQ)

CBWFQ extends the standard WFQ functionality to provide support for user-defined traffic classes. For CBWFQ, you define traffic classes based on match criteria including protocols, access control lists (ACLs), and input interfaces. Packets satisfying the match criteria for a class constitute the traffic for that class.

- Priority queueing (PQ). With PQ, packets belonging to one priority class of traffic are sent before all lower priority traffic to ensure timely delivery of those packets.

Note You can assign only one queueing mechanism type to an interface.

Note A variety of queueing mechanisms can be configured using multilink, for example, Multichassis Multilink PPP (MMP). However, if only PPP is used on a tunneled interface--for example, virtual private dialup network (VPND), PPP over Ethernet (PPPoE)--no queueing can be configured on the virtual interface.

- Bandwidth Management

CBWFQ and LLQ (as well as other QoS functionality) can al reserve and consume bandwidth, up to a maximum of the reserved bandwidth on an interface. Specific commands can be used to allocate and fineptune bandwidth as needed. For more information, see the Bandwidth Management, on page 13.

Finding Feature Information

Your software release may not support all the features documented in this module. For the latest caveats and feature information, see Bug Search Tool and the release notes for your platform and software release. To find information about the features documented in this module, and to see a list of the releases in which each feature is supported, see the feature information table.

Use Cisco Feature Navigator to find information about platform support and Cisco software image support. To access Cisco Feature Navigator, go to www.cisco.com/go/cfn. An account on Cisco.com is not required.

Why Use Congestion Management

Heterogeneous networks include many different protocols used by applications, giving rise to the need to prioritize traffic in order to satisfy time-critical applications while still addressing the needs of less time-dependent applications, such as file transfer. Different types of traffic sharing a data path through the network can interact with one another in ways that affect their application performance. If your network is designed to support different traffic types that share a single data path between routers, you should consider using congestion management techniques to ensure fairness of treatment across the various traffic types.

Here are some broad factors to consider in determining whether to configure congestion management QoS:

- Traffic prioritization is especially important for delay-sensitive, interactive transaction-based applications--for instance, desktop video conferencing--that require higher priority than do file transfer applications. However, use of WFQ ensures that all traffic is treated fairly, given its weight, and in a dynamic manner. For example, WFQ addresses the requirements of the interactive application without penalizing the FTP application.
- Prioritization is most effective on WAN links where the combination of bursty traffic and relatively lower data rates can cause temporary congestion.
- Depending on the average packet size, prioritization is most effective when applied to links at T1/E1 bandwidth speeds or lower.
- If users of applications running across your network notice poor response time, you should consider using congestion management features. Congestion management features are dynamic, tailoring themselves to the existing network conditions. However, consider that if a WAN link is constantly congested, traffic prioritization may *not* resolve the problem. Adding bandwidth might be the appropriate solution.
- If there is no congestion on the WAN link, there is no reason to implement traffic prioritization.

The following list summarizes aspects you should consider in determining whether you should establish and implement a queueing policy for your network:

- Determine if the WAN is congested--that is, whether users of certain applications perceive a performance degradation.
- Determine your goals and objectives based on the mix of traffic you need to manage and your network topology and design. In identifying what you want to achieve, consider whether your goal is among the following:
  - To establish fair distribution of bandwidth allocation across all of the types of traffic you identify.
  - To grant strict priority to traffic from special kinds of applications you service--for example, interactive multimedia applications--possibly at the expense of less-critical traffic you also support.
  - To customize bandwidth allocation so that network resources are shared among all of the applications you service, each having the specific bandwidth requirements you have identified.
  - To effectively configure queueing. You must analyze the types of traffic using the interface and determine how to distinguish them. See the "Classification Overview" module for a description of how packets are classified.

After you assess your needs, review the available congestion management queueing mechanisms described in this module and determine which approach best addresses your requirements and goals.

- Configure the interface for the kind of queueing strategy you have chosen, and observe the results.

Traffic patterns change over time, so you should repeat the analysis process described in the second bullet periodically, and adapt the queueing configuration accordingly.

See the following section Deciding Which Queueing Policy to Use for elaboration of the differences among the various queueing mechanisms.

Deciding Which Queueing Policy to Use

When deciding which queueing policy to use, note the following points:

- PQ guarantees strict priority in that it ensures that one type of traffic will be sent, possibly at the expense of all others. For PQ, a low priority queue can be detrimentally affected, and, in the worst case, never allowed to send its packets if a limited amount of bandwidth is available or if the transmission rate of critical traffic is high.
- WFQ does not require configuration of access lists to determine the preferred traffic on a serial interface. Rather, the fair queue algorithm dynamically sorts traffic into messages that are part of a conversation.
- Low-volume, interactive traffic gets fair allocation of bandwidth with WFQ, as does high-volume traffic such as file transfers.
- Strict priority queueing can be accomplished with WFQ by using low latency queueing (LLQ). Strict PQ allows delay-sensitive data such as voice to be dequeued and sent before packets in other queues are dequeued.

The table below compares the salient features of flow-based WFQ, CBWFQ, and PQ.

Table 1: Queueing Comparison

	WFQ	**CBWFQ/**	**PQ**
Number of Queues	Configurable number of queues (256 user queues, by default)	One queue per class, up to 64 classes	4 queues
Kind of Service	• Ensures fairness among all traffic flows based on weights	• Provides class bandwidth guarantee for user-defined traffic classes • Provides flow-based WFQ support for nonuser-defined traffic classes • Strict priority queueing is available through use of the LLQ.	• High priority queues are serviced first

Weighted Fair Queueing

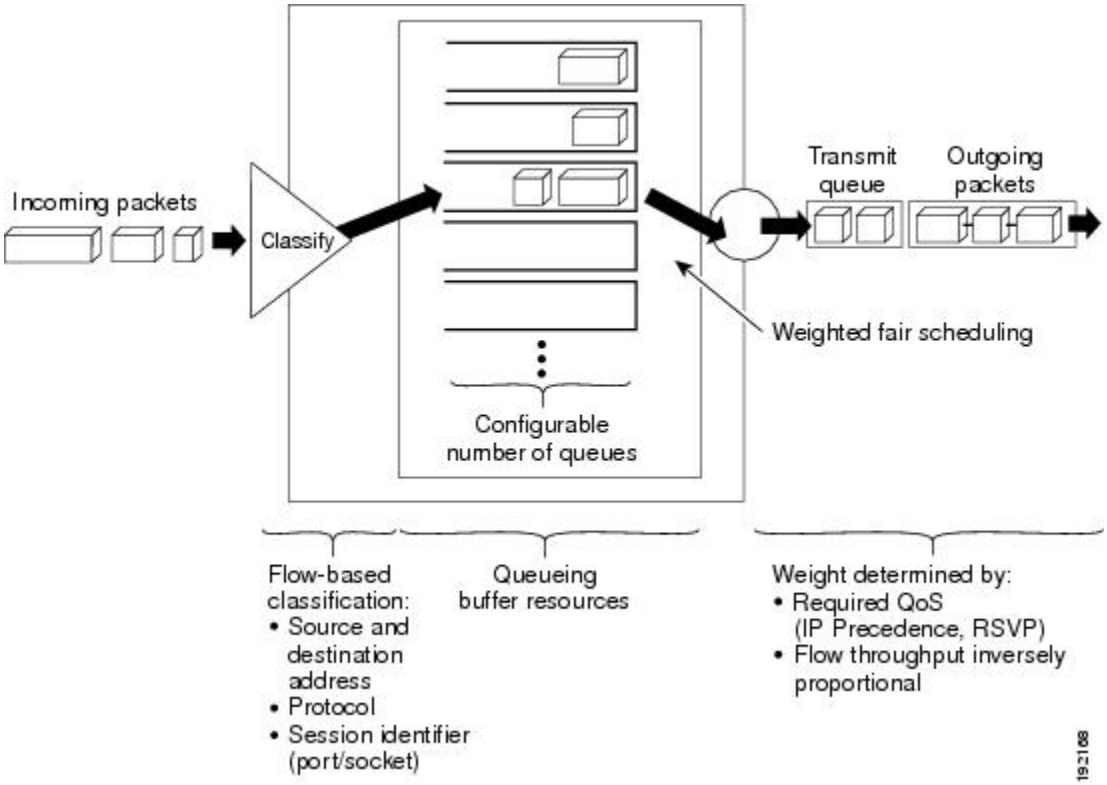
This section contains overview information about WFQ (often referred to as flow-based WFQ).

WFQ Functionality

WFQ is a dynamic scheduling method that provides fair bandwidth allocation to all network traffic. WFQ applies priority, or weights, to identified traffic to classify traffic into conversations and determine how much

bandwidth each conversation is allowed relative to other conversations. WFQ is a flow-based algorithm that simultaneously schedules interactive traffic to the front of a queue to reduce response time and fairly shares the remaining bandwidth among high-bandwidth flows. In other words, WFQ allows you to give low-volume traffic, such as Telnet sessions, priority over high-volume traffic, such as FTP sessions. WFQ gives concurrent file transfers balanced use of link capacity; that is, when multiple file transfers occur, the transfers are given comparable bandwidth. The figure below shows how WFQ works.

Figure 1: Weighted Fair Queueing



WFQ provides traffic priority management that dynamically sorts traffic into messages that make up a conversation. WFQ breaks up the train of packets within a conversation to ensure that bandwidth is shared fairly between individual conversations and that low-volume traffic is transferred in a timely fashion.

WFQ classifies traffic into different flows based on packet header addressing, including such characteristics as source and destination network or MAC address, protocol, source and destination port and socket numbers of the session, Frame Relay data-link connection identifier (DLCI) value, and ToS value. There are two categories of flows: high-bandwidth sessions and low-bandwidth sessions. Low-bandwidth traffic has effective priority over high-bandwidth traffic, and high-bandwidth traffic shares the transmission service proportionally according to assigned weights. Low-bandwidth traffic streams, which comprise the majority of traffic, receive preferential service, allowing their entire offered loads to be sent in a timely fashion. High-volume traffic streams share the remaining capacity proportionally among themselves.

WFQ places packets of the various conversations in the fair queues before transmission. The order of removal from the fair queues is determined by the virtual time of the delivery of the last bit of each arriving packet.

New messages for high-bandwidth flows are discarded after the congestive-messages threshold has been met. However, low-bandwidth flows, which include control-message conversations, continue to enqueue data. As a result, the fair queue may occasionally contain more messages than are specified by the threshold number.

WFQ can manage duplex data streams, such as those between pairs of applications, and simplex data streams such as voice or video.

The WFQ algorithm also addresses the problem of round-trip delay variability. If multiple high-volume conversations are active, their transfer rates and interarrival periods are made much more predictable. WFQ greatly enhances algorithms such as Systems Network Architecture (SNA) Logical Link Control (LLC) and TCP congestion control and slow start features.

WFQ is used as the default queueing mode on most serial interfaces configured to run at E1 speeds (2.048 Mbps) or below.

WFQ provides the solution for situations in which it is desirable to provide consistent response time to heavy and light network users alike without adding excessive bandwidth. WFQ automatically adapts to changing network traffic conditions.

Restrictions

WFQ is not supported with tunneling and encryption because these features modify the packet content information required by WFQ for classification.

Although WFQ automatically adapts to changing network traffic conditions, it does not offer the degree of precision control over bandwidth allocation that CQ and CBWFQ offer.

WFQ and IP Precedence

WFQ is IP precedence-aware. It can detect higher priority packets marked with precedence by the IP Forwarder and can schedule them faster, providing superior response time for this traffic. Thus, as the precedence increases, WFQ allocates more bandwidth to the conversation during periods of congestion.

WFQ assigns a weight to each flow, which determines the transmit order for queued packets. In this scheme, lower weights are served first. For standard Cisco IOS WFQ, the IP precedence serves as a divisor to this weighting factor.

Like CQ, WFQ sends a certain number of bytes from each queue. With WFQ, each queue corresponds to a different flow. For each cycle through all flows, WFQ effectively sends a number of bytes equal to the precedence of the flow plus one. This number is only used as a ratio to determine how many bytes per packets to send. However, for the purposes of understanding WFQ, using this number as the byte count is sufficient. For instance, traffic with an IP Precedence value of 7 gets a lower weight than traffic with an IP Precedence value of 3, thus, the priority in transmit order. The weights are inversely proportional to the IP Precedence value.

To determine the bandwidth allocation for each queue, divide the byte count for the flow by the total byte count for all flows. For example, if you have one flow at each precedence level, each flow will get precedence + 1 parts of the link:

$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 = 36$

Thus, precedence 0 traffic will get 1/36 of the bandwidth, precedence 1 traffic will get 2/36, and precedence 7 traffic will get 8/36.

However, if you have 18 precedence 1 flows and one of each of the rest, the total is now:

$1 + 2(18) + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 = 70$

Precedence 0 traffic will get 1/70, each of the precedence 1 flows will get 2/70, and so on.

As flows are added or ended, the actual allocated bandwidth will continuously change.

WFQ and RSVP

RSVP uses WFQ to allocate buffer space and schedule packets, and to guarantee bandwidth for reserved flows. WFQ works with RSVP to help provide differentiated and guaranteed QoS services.

RSVP is the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) Internet Standard (RFC 2205) protocol for allowing an application to dynamically reserve network bandwidth. RSVP enables applications to request a specific QoS for a data flow. The Cisco implementation allows RSVP to be initiated within the network using configured proxy RSVP.

RSVP is the only standard signalling protocol designed to guarantee network bandwidth from end to end for IP networks. Hosts and routers use RSVP to deliver QoS requests to the routers along the paths of the data stream and to maintain router and host state to provide the requested service, usually bandwidth and latency. RSVP uses a mean data rate, the largest amount of data the router will keep in queue, and minimum QoS to determine bandwidth reservation.

WFQ or Weighted Random Early Detection (WRED) acts as the preparer for RSVP, setting up the packet classification and scheduling required for the reserved flows. Using WFQ, RSVP can deliver an Integrated Services Guaranteed Service.

Class-Based Weighted Fair Queueing

CBWFQ extends the standard WFQ functionality to provide support for user-defined traffic classes. For CBWFQ, you define traffic classes based on match criteria including protocols, access control lists (ACLs), and input interfaces. Packets satisfying the match criteria for a class constitute the traffic for that class.

Once a class has been defined according to its match criteria, you can assign it characteristics. To characterize a class, you assign it bandwidth, weight, and maximum packet limit. The bandwidth assigned to a class is the guaranteed bandwidth delivered to the class during congestion.

To characterize a class, you also specify the queue limit for that class, which is the maximum number of packets allowed to accumulate in the queue for the class. Packets belonging to a class are subject to the bandwidth and queue limits that characterize the class.

After a queue has reached its configured queue limit, enqueueing of additional packets to the class causes tail drop or packet drop to take effect, depending on how class policy is configured.

Tail drop is used for CBWFQ classes unless you explicitly configure policy for a class to use WRED to drop packets as a means of avoiding congestion. Note that if you use WRED packet drop instead of tail drop for one or more classes comprising a policy map, you must ensure that WRED is not configured for the interface to which you attach that service policy.

If a default class is configured with the **bandwidth** policy-map class configuration command, all unclassified traffic is put into a single queue and given treatment according to the configured bandwidth. If a default class is configured with the **fair-queue** command, all unclassified traffic is flow classified and given best-effort treatment. If no default class is configured, then by default the traffic that does not match any of the configured classes is flow classified and given best-effort treatment. Once a packet is classified, all of the standard mechanisms that can be used to differentiate service among the classes apply.

Flow classification is standard WFQ treatment. That is, packets with the same source IP address, destination IP address, source TCP or UDP port, or destination TCP or UDP port are classified as belonging to the same flow. WFQ allocates an equal share of bandwidth to each flow. Flow-based WFQ is also called fair queueing because all flows are equally weighted.

For CBWFQ, the weight specified for the class becomes the weight of each packet that meets the match criteria of the class. Packets that arrive at the output interface are classified according to the match criteria filters you define, then each one is assigned the appropriate weight. The weight for a packet belonging to a specific class is derived from the bandwidth you assigned to the class when you configured it; in this sense the weight for a class is user-configurable.

After the weight for a packet is assigned, the packet is enqueued in the appropriate class queue. CBWFQ uses the weights assigned to the queued packets to ensure that the class queue is serviced fairly.

Configuring a class policy--thus, configuring CBWFQ--entails these three processes:

- Defining traffic classes to specify the classification policy (class maps).

This process determines how many types of packets are to be differentiated from one another.

- Associating policies--that is, class characteristics--with each traffic class (policy maps).

This process entails configuration of policies to be applied to packets belonging to one of the classes previously defined through a class map. For this process, you configure a policy map that specifies the policy for each traffic class.

- Attaching policies to interfaces (service policies).

This process requires that you associate an existing policy map, or service policy, with an interface to apply the particular set of policies for the map to that interface.

CBWFQ Bandwidth Allocation

The sum of all bandwidth allocation on an interface cannot exceed 75 percent of the total available interface bandwidth. The remaining 25 percent is used for other overhead, including Layer 2 overhead, routing traffic, and best-effort traffic. Bandwidth for the CBWFQ class-default class, for instance, is taken from the remaining 25 percent. However, under aggressive circumstances in which you want to configure more than 75 percent of the interface bandwidth to classes, you can override the 75 percent maximum sum allocated to all classes or flows using the **max-reserved-bandwidth** command. If you want to override the default 75 percent, exercise caution and ensure that you allow enough remaining bandwidth to support best-effort and control traffic, and Layer 2 overhead.

Why Use CBWFQ?

Here are some general factors you should consider in determining whether you need to configure CBWFQ:

- Bandwidth allocation. CBWFQ allows you to specify the exact amount of bandwidth to be allocated for a specific class of traffic. Taking into account available bandwidth on the interface, you can configure up to 64 classes and control distribution among them, which is not the case with flow-based WFQ. Flow-based WFQ applies weights to traffic to classify it into conversations and determine how much bandwidth each conversation is allowed relative to other conversations. For flow-based WFQ, these weights, and traffic classification, are dependent on and limited to the seven IP Precedence levels.
- Coarser granularity and scalability. CBWFQ allows you to define what constitutes a class based on criteria that exceed the confines of flow. CBWFQ allows you to use ACLs and protocols or input interface names to define how traffic will be classified, thereby providing coarser granularity. You need not maintain traffic classification on a flow basis. Moreover, you can configure up to 64 discrete classes in a service policy.

CBWFQ and RSVP

RSVP can be used in conjunction with CBWFQ. When both RSVP and CBWFQ are configured for an interface, RSVP and CBWFQ act independently, exhibiting the same behavior that they would if each were running alone. RSVP continues to work as it does when CBWFQ is not present, even in regard to bandwidth availability assessment and allocation.

Restrictions

Configuring CBWFQ on a physical interface is only possible if the interface is in the default queueing mode. Serial interfaces at E1 (2.048 Mbps) and below use WFQ by default--other interfaces use FIFO by default. Enabling CBWFQ on a physical interface overrides the default interface queueing method.

If you configure a class in a policy map to use WRED for packet drop instead of tail drop, you must ensure that WRED is not configured on the interface to which you intend to attach that service policy.

Low Latency Queueing

The LLQ feature brings strict PQ to CBWFQ. Strict PQ allows delay-sensitive data such as voice to be dequeued and sent before packets in other queues are dequeued.

Without LLQ, CBWFQ provides WFQ based on defined classes with no strict priority queue available for real-time traffic. CBWFQ allows you to define traffic classes and then assign characteristics to that class. For example, you can designate the minimum bandwidth delivered to the class during congestion.

For CBWFQ, the weight for a packet belonging to a specific class is derived from the bandwidth you assigned to the class when you configured it. Therefore, the bandwidth assigned to the packets of a class determines the order in which packets are sent. All packets are serviced fairly based on weight; no class of packets may be granted strict priority. This scheme poses problems for voice traffic that is largely intolerant of delay, especially variation in delay. For voice traffic, variations in delay introduce irregularities of transmission manifesting as jitter in the heard conversation.

LLQ provides strict priority queueing for CBWFQ, reducing jitter in voice conversations. Configured by the **priority** command, LLQ enables use of a single, strict priority queue within CBWFQ at the class level, allowing you to direct traffic belonging to a class to the CBWFQ strict priority queue. To enqueue class traffic to the strict priority queue, you specify the named class within a policy map and then configure the **priority** command for the class. (Classes to which the **priority** command is applied are considered priority classes.) Within a policy map, you can give one or more classes priority status. When multiple classes within a single policy map are configured as priority classes, all traffic from these classes is enqueued to the same, single, strict priority queue.

One of the ways in which the strict PQ used within CBWFQ differs from its use outside CBWFQ is in the parameters it takes. Outside CBWFQ, you can use the **ip rtp priority** command to specify the range of UDP ports whose voice traffic flows are to be given priority service. Using the **priority** command, you are no longer limited to a UDP port number to stipulate priority flows because you can configure the priority status for a class within CBWFQ. Instead, all of the valid match criteria used to specify traffic for a class now apply to priority traffic. These methods of specifying traffic for a class include matching on access lists, protocols, and input interfaces. Moreover, within an access list you can specify that traffic matches are allowed based on the IP differentiated services code point (DSCP) value that is set using the first six bits of the ToS byte in the IP header.

Although it is possible to enqueue various types of real-time traffic to the strict priority queue, we strongly recommend that you direct only voice traffic to it because voice traffic is well-behaved, whereas other types of real-time traffic are not. Moreover, voice traffic requires that delay be nonvariable in order to avoid jitter.

Real-time traffic such as video could introduce variation in delay, thereby thwarting the steadiness of delay required for successful voice traffic transmission.

For information on how to configure LLQ, see the "Configuring Weighted Fair Queueing" module.

LLQ Bandwidth Allocation

When you specify the **priority** command for a class, it takes a *bandwidth* argument that gives maximum bandwidth in kbps. You use this parameter to specify the maximum amount of bandwidth allocated for packets belonging to the class configured with the **priority** command. The bandwidth parameter both guarantees bandwidth to the priority class and restrains the flow of packets from the priority class.

In the event of congestion, policing is used to drop packets when the bandwidth is exceeded. Voice traffic enqueued to the priority queue is UDP-based and therefore not adaptive to the early packet drop characteristic of WRED. Because WRED is ineffective, you cannot use the WRED **random-detect** command with the **priority** command.

When congestion occurs, traffic destined for the priority queue is metered to ensure that the bandwidth allocation configured for the class to which the traffic belongs is not exceeded.

Priority traffic metering has the following qualities:

- Priority traffic metering is only performed under congestion conditions. When the device is not congested, the priority class traffic is allowed to exceed its allocated bandwidth. When the device is congested, the priority class traffic above the allocated bandwidth is discarded.
- It is performed on a per-packet basis, and tokens are replenished as packets are sent. If not enough tokens are available to send the packet, it is dropped.
- It restrains priority traffic to its allocated bandwidth to ensure that nonpriority traffic, such as routing packets and other data, is not starved.

With metering, the classes are policed and rate-limited individually. That is, although a single policy map might contain four priority classes, all of which are enqueued in a single priority queue, they are each treated as separate flows with separate bandwidth allocations and constraints.

It is important to note that because bandwidth for the priority class is specified as a parameter to the **priority** command, you cannot also configure the **bandwidth** policy-map class configuration command for a priority class. To do so is a configuration violation that would only introduce confusion in relation to the amount of bandwidth to allocate.

The bandwidth allocated for a priority queue always includes the Layer 2 encapsulation header. However, it does not include other headers. When you calculate the amount of bandwidth to allocate for a given priority class, you must account for the fact that Layer 2 headers are included. You must also allow bandwidth for the possibility of jitter introduced by routers in the voice path.

Note The sum of all bandwidth allocation on an interface cannot exceed 75 percent of the total available interface bandwidth. However, under aggressive circumstances in which you want to configure more than 75 percent of the interface bandwidth to classes, you can override the 75 percent maximum sum allocated to all classes or flows using the **max-reserved-bandwidth** command. The **max-reserved-bandwidth** command is intended for use on main interfaces only.

Why Use LLQ?

Here are some general factors you should consider in determining whether you need to configure LLQ:

- LLQ provides strict priority service serial interfaces.
- LLQ is not limited to UDP port numbers. Because you can configure the priority status for a class within CBWFQ, you are no longer limited to UDP port numbers to stipulate priority flows. Instead, all of the valid match criteria used to specify traffic for a class now apply to priority traffic.
- By configuring the maximum amount of bandwidth allocated for packets belonging to a class, you can avoid starving nonpriority traffic.

Restrictions

The following restrictions apply to LLQ:

- The **random-detect** command, **shape** command, and **bandwidth** policy-map class configuration command cannot be used in conjunction with **priority** command in the same class-map.
- The **priority** command can be configured in multiple classes, but it should only be used for voice-like, constant bit rate (CBR) traffic.
- The **queue-limit** command can be configured in conjunction with the **priority** command when only one priority queue of a particular level exists in the policy-map.
- You cannot configure the default queue as a priority queue at any level.
- On Cisco ASR 1000 Series Aggregation Services Routers, the use of a conditional priority rate limiter, such as bandwidth-kbps or percentage, is not supported in the lowest level (grandchild or leaf) of a three-layer policy map configuration. At the lowest level of a three-level policy, the conditional limiter will not be applied. However, priority with a strict policer is supported at this level of the hierarchy. This restriction does not apply to flat or two-level hierarchical policy maps.
- On Cisco ASR 1000 Series Aggregation Services Routers, priority queues cannot be modified on attached policy-maps. In order to modify a priority queue, the policy-map must be detached from all interfaces and modified before re-attaching or the **priority** command itself must be removed and re-applied.

Priority Queueing

PQ allows you to define how traffic is prioritized in the network. You configure four traffic priorities. You can define a series of filters based on packet characteristics to cause the router to place traffic into these four queues; the queue with the highest priority is serviced first until it is empty, then the lower queues are serviced in sequence.

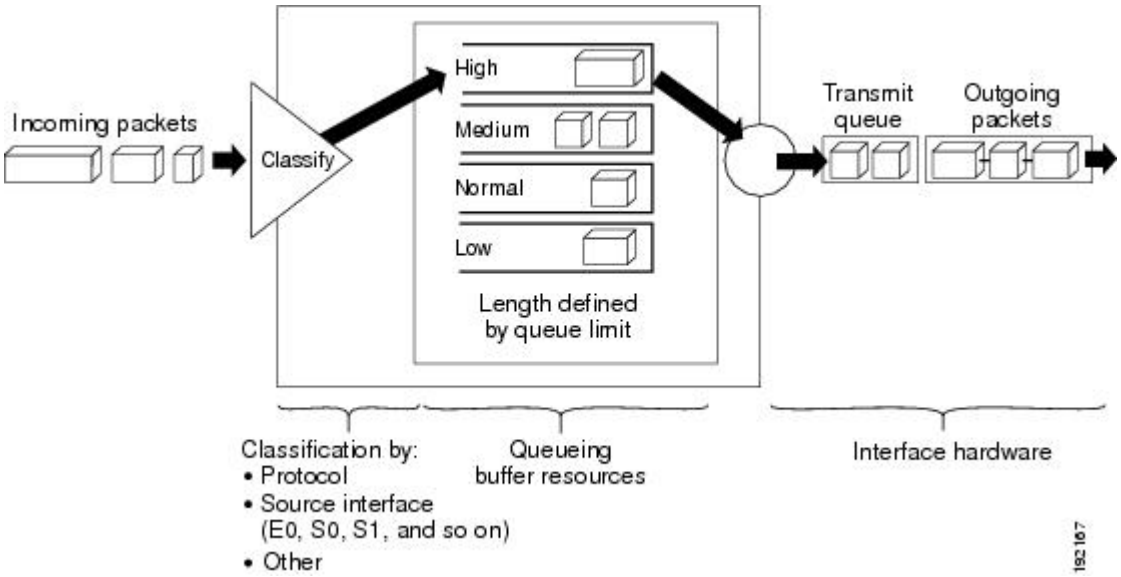
For information on how to configure PQ, see the "Configuring Priority Queueing" module.

How It Works

During transmission, PQ gives priority queues absolute preferential treatment over low priority queues; important traffic, given the highest priority, always takes precedence over less important traffic. Packets are classified based on user-specified criteria and placed into one of the four output queues--high, medium, normal,

and low--based on the assigned priority. Packets that are not classified by priority fall into the normal queue. The figure below illustrates this process.

Figure 2: Priority Queueing



When a packet is to be sent out an interface, the priority queues on that interface are scanned for packets in descending order of priority. The high priority queue is scanned first, then the medium priority queue, and so on. The packet at the head of the highest queue is chosen for transmission. This procedure is repeated every time a packet is to be sent.

The maximum length of a queue is defined by the length limit. When a queue is longer than the queue limit, all additional packets are dropped.

Note The priority output queueing mechanism can be used to manage traffic from all networking protocols. Additional fine-tuning is available for IP and for setting boundaries on the packet size.

How Packets Are Classified for Priority Queueing

A priority list is a set of rules that describe how packets should be assigned to priority queues. A priority list might also describe a default priority or the queue size limits of the various priority queues.

Packets can be classified by the following criteria:

- Protocol or subprotocol type
- Incoming interface
- Packet size
- Fragments
- Access list

Keepalives sourced by the network server are always assigned to the high priority queue; all other management traffic (such as Interior Gateway Routing Protocol (IGRP) updates) must be configured. Packets that are not classified by the priority list mechanism are assigned to the normal queue.

Why Use Priority Queueing?

PQ provides absolute preferential treatment to high priority traffic, ensuring that mission-critical traffic traversing various WAN links gets priority treatment. In addition, PQ provides a faster response time than do other methods of queueing.

Although you can enable priority output queueing for any interface, it is best used for low-bandwidth, congested serial interfaces.

Restrictions

When choosing to use PQ, consider that because lower priority traffic is often denied bandwidth in favor of higher priority traffic, use of PQ could, in the worst case, result in lower priority traffic never being sent. To avoid inflicting these conditions on lower priority traffic, you can use traffic shaping to rate-limit the higher priority traffic.

PQ introduces extra overhead that is acceptable for slow interfaces, but may not be acceptable for higher speed interfaces such as Ethernet. With PQ enabled, the system takes longer to switch packets because the packets are classified by the processor card.

PQ uses a static configuration and does not adapt to changing network conditions.

PQ is not supported on any tunnels.

Bandwidth Management

RSVP, CBWFQ and LLQ can all reserve and consume bandwidth, up to a maximum of the reserved bandwidth on an interface.

To allocate bandwidth, you can use one of the following commands:

- For RSVP, use the **ip rsvp bandwidth** command.
- For CBWFQ, use the **bandwidth** policy-map class configuration command.
- For LLQ, you can allocate bandwidth using the **priority** command.

When you configure these commands, be aware of bandwidth limitations and configure bandwidth according to requirements in your network. Remember, the sum of all bandwidths cannot exceed the maximum reserved bandwidth. The default maximum bandwidth is 75 percent of the total available bandwidth on the interface. The remaining 25 percent of bandwidth is used for overhead, including Layer 2 overhead, routing traffic, and best-effort traffic.

If you find that it is necessary to change the maximum reserved bandwidth, you can change the maximum bandwidth by using the **max-reserved-bandwidth** command. The **max-reserved-bandwidth** command can be used only on interfaces; it cannot be used on VCs.