

IPv6 indicator to business leaders is clear

Less than 10% of IPv4 addresses remain unallocated

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Organizations relying on the Internet to conduct business have only a limited time to act and adapt to changing technology. Those that delay, run the risk their online services may become unavailable to a rapidly growing number of users.

The Number Resource Organization (NRO), the official representative of the five Regional Internet Registries (RIRs) that oversee the allocation of all Internet number resources, recently announced that less than 10% of available IPv4 (Internet Protocol version 4) addresses remain unallocated.

IP addresses are the unique numbers that help identify devices and allow them to communicate over a network, or on the Internet. IPv4 is the current standard for IP addresses.

“We've reached a critical low water mark for IP addresses. Out of the original 4.5 billion addresses, less than 400 million remain. This is simply not enough to fuel further Internet growth. Consider how many new Internet compatible mobile phones were connected during 2009 in the Asia Pacific alone,” said Mr Geoff Huston, Chief Scientist for the Asia Pacific Network Information Centre (APNIC) and global expert on IP address usage.

APNIC will keep allocating IPv4 addresses to the industry; however, it anticipates the central IANA pool will run out during late 2011. Internet service providers (ISP) in the Asia Pacific region will be able to obtain IPv4 IP addresses for some months thereafter until the APNIC pool is also exhausted.

“This industry has been talking about transitioning to a new version of the Internet protocol with a larger address space for many years. It's now well and truly time to change from talk to action, and roll out the IPv6 Internet,” said Mr Huston.

IPv4 depletion became a concern to APNIC and the technical community in the 1990s, when the Internet started to experience dramatic growth. In response, a next generation protocol (IPv6) was developed which provides a vastly increased address space that will allow the Internet to continue to expand and innovate. In practical terms, ISPs will ultimately be forced to connect new users and business customers with IPv6 addresses, which are unable to access content stored on devices connected using an IPv4 address.



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Mr Paul Wilson, Director General of APNIC, warns: “Reaching this 10% threshold should serve as an indisputable indicator to Asia Pacific business leaders from all sectors. Without planning and risk assessment, IPv4 exhaustion poses a tangible threat to the long-term growth and innovation of virtually all organizations in the region.

“It is critical that industry leaders assess the risk this exhaustion will have on their businesses so they can adapt to the changes it will present, and take advantage of the IPv6 growth potential. Using IPv6 will enable the Internet to continue to grow to millions of times its current size in terms of devices connected,” said Mr Wilson.

If organizations wish to remain competitive and retain market share, key decisions makers such as CEOs and CIOs must analyse how their operations, in particular their ongoing service delivery, will be affected in the short, medium, and long term. This is not an issue that only affects the ICT sector, explained Mr Wilson.

While IPv4 exhaustion is of global concern, the Asia Pacific region is uniquely affected because of the rapid pace of growth in the region. Of the 190.1 million IPv4 addresses allocated during 2009, just under half (45.87%) were allocated in the Asia Pacific, with China consuming more IPv4 addresses than any other economy. There is also a huge untapped potential for growth in the local Internet market, with some regions in Asia estimated to have broadband penetration rates as low as 15%.

APNIC calls on business leaders to act now by ensuring that access to online content continues via IPv4 and IPv6 (dual stacking), that suppliers, partners, equipment vendors, and hosting companies support IPv6; and that staff are adequately trained on IPv6.

“What key decision makers need to realize is that without IPv6 deployment, their businesses will be affected by IPv4 address depletion. We have now come to that critical stage, where if they don’t act now, there will be consequences. APNIC has provided and continues to provide evidence of this depletion and resources for organizations to utilize,” states Mr Wilson.

APNIC collects and communicates information from organizations that have deployed IPv6 and shares this across the region. The information is freely accessible via the APNIC website, including APstats, (APNIC statistics portal), <http://icons.apnic.net/ipv6>, and various presentations.

All of this information is accessible on www.apnic.net/ipv6.



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Interview Opportunities

Geoff Huston, Chief Scientist of APNIC (<http://www.apnic.net/events/apnic-speakers/geoff-huston>) and Paul Wilson, Director General (<http://www.apnic.net/events/apnic-speakers/paul-wilson>) are available for phone interviews from February 4, 2010. Translation services may be available on request.

There are also several press resources available, including statistics on IP address usage in individual economies/countries and an IP address exhaustion graph for print reproduction.

APNIC can also refer you to local organizations and contacts in your economy that can also give additional local commentary.

For more information on APNIC:

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Biographies and high res photos are available on request.