CHAPTER 1

Overview

Enhanced IGRP is an enhanced version of the Interior Gateway Routing Protocol (IGRP) developed by Cisco Systems, Inc. Enhanced IGRP uses the same distance vector algorithm and distance information as IGRP. However, the convergence properties and the operating efficiency of enhanced IGRP have improved significantly over IGRP.

The convergence technology is based on research conducted at SRI International and employs an algorithm referred to as the Diffusing Update Algorithm (DUAL). This algorithm guarantees loop-free operation at every instant throughout a route computation and allows all routers involved in a topology change to synchronize at the same time. Routers that are not affected by topology changes are not involved in recomputations. The convergence time with DUAL rivals that of any other existing routing protocol.

The initial implementation of IGRP operated in Internet Protocol (IP) networks. Enhanced IGRP extends IGRP so that it is independent of the network-layer protocol. In addition to IP, it now also operates in AppleTalk and Novell IPX networks.

Enhanced IGRP Features

Enhanced IGRP offers the following features:

- Fast convergence. The DUAL algorithm allows routing information to converge as quickly as any currently available routing protocol.
- Partial updates. Enhanced IGRP sends incremental updates when the state of a destination changes, instead of sending the entire contents of the routing table. This feature minimizes the bandwidth required for enhanced IGRP packets.
- Less CPU usage than IGRP. This occurs because full update packets do not have to be processed each time they are received.
- Neighbor discovery mechanism. This is a simple hello mechanism used to learn about neighboring routers. It is protocol-independent.
- Variable-length subnet masks in IP.
- Arbitrary route summarization in IP.
- Scaling. Enhanced IGRP scales to large networks.

Enhanced IGRP Components

Enhanced IGRP has four basic components:

- Neighbor discovery/recovery
- Reliable transport protocol
- DUAL finite state machine
- Protocol-dependent modules

Neighbor discovery/recovery is the process that routers use to dynamically learn of other routers on their directly attached networks. Routers must also discover when their neighbors become unreachable or inoperative. Neighbor discovery/recovery is achieved with low overhead by periodically sending small hello packets. As long as hello packets are received, a router can determine that a neighbor is alive and functioning. Once this status is determined, the neighboring routers can exchange routing information.

The reliable transport protocol is responsible for guaranteed, ordered delivery of enhanced IGRP packets to all neighbors. It supports intermixed transmission of multicast and unicast packets. Some enhanced IGRP packets must be transmitted reliably and others need not be. For efficiency, reliability is provided only when necessary. For example, on a multiaccess network that has multicast capabilities, such as Ethernet, it is not necessary to send hellos reliably to all neighbors individually. Therefore, enhanced IGRP sends a single multicast hello with an indication in the packet informing the receivers that the packet need not be acknowledged. Other types of packets, such as updates, require acknowledgment, and this is indicated in the packet. The reliable transport has a provision to send multicast packets quickly when there are unacknowledged packets pending. Doing so helps ensure that convergence time remains low in the presence of varying speed links.

The DUAL finite state machine embodies the decision process for all route computations. It tracks all routes advertised by all neighbors. DUAL uses the distance information, known as a metric, to select efficient, loop-free paths. DUAL selects routes to be inserted into a routing table based on feasible successors. A successor is a neighboring router used for packet forwarding that has a least-cost path to a destination that is guaranteed not to be part of a routing loop. When there are no feasible successors but there are neighbors advertising the destination, a recomputation must occur. This is the process whereby a new successor is determined. The amount of time it takes to recompute the route affects the convergence time. Even though the recomputation is not processor intensive, it is advantageous to avoid recomputation if it is not necessary. When a topology change occurs, DUAL will test for feasible successors. If there are feasible successors, it will use any it finds in order to avoid unnecessary recomputation.

The protocol-dependent modules are responsible for network layer protocol-specific tasks. An example is the IP enhanced IGRP module, which is responsible for sending and receiving enhanced IGRP packets that are encapsulated in IP. It is also responsible for parsing enhanced IGRP packets and informing DUAL of the new information received. IP enhanced IGRP asks DUAL to make routing decisions, but the results are stored in the IP routing table. Also, IP enhanced IGRP is responsible for redistributing routes learned by other IP routing protocols.