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Simple Network Paging Protocol - Version 2

Status of this Memo

This memo provides information for the Internet community. This memo does not specify an Internet standard of any kind. Distribution of this memo is unlimited.

Abstract

This RFC suggests a simple way for delivering both alphanumeric and numeric pages (one-way) to radio paging terminals. Gateways supporting this protocol, as well as SMTP, have been in use for several months for nationwide paging and messaging. In addition, email filters and SNPP client software for Unix and Windows are available at no cost. Please contact the author for more information.

Earlier versions of this specification were reviewed by IESG members and the "822 Extensions" Working Group. They preferred an alternate strategy, as discussed under "Relationship to Other IETF Work", below.

1. Introduction

Beepers are as much a part of computer nerdom as X-terminals (perhaps, unfortunately, more). The intent of Simple Network Paging Protocol is to provide a standard whereby pages can be delivered to individual paging terminals. The most obvious benefit is the elimination of the need for modems and phone lines to produce alphanumeric pages, and the added ease of delivery of pages to terminals in other cities or countries. Additionally, automatic page delivery should be somewhat more simplified.

2. System Philosophy

Radio paging is somewhat taken for granted, because of the wide availability and wide use of paging products. However, the actual delivery of the page, and the process used (especially in wider area paging) is somewhat complicated. When a user initiates a page, by dialing a number on a telephone, or entering an alphanumeric page through some input device, the page must ultimately be delivered to

some paging terminal, somewhere. In most cases, this delivery is made using TAP (Telocator Alphanumeric input Protocol, also known as IXO). This protocol can be a somewhat convoluted, and complicated protocol using older style ASCII control characters and a non-standard checksumming routine to assist in validating the data.

Even though TAP is widely used throughout the industry, there are plans on the table to move to a more flexible "standard" protocol referred to as TME (Telocator Message Entry Protocol). The level two enhancements to SNPP (as described below) are intended for use with this forthcoming standard.

However, acknowledging the complexity and flexibility of the current protocols (or the lack thereof), the final user function is quite simple: to deliver a page from point-of-origin to someone's beeper. That is the simple, real-time function that the base protocol attempts to address. Validation of the paging information is left completely up to the paging terminal, making an SNPP gateway a direct "shim" between a paging terminal and the Internet.

3. Why not just use Email and SMTP?

Email, while quite reliable, is not always timely. A good example of this is deferred messaging when a gateway is down. Suppose Mary Ghoti (fish@hugecompany.org) sends a message to Zaphod Beeblebrox's beeper (5551212@pager.pagingcompany.com). Hugecompany's gateway to the Internet is down causing Mary's message to be deferred. Mary, however, is not notified of this delay because her message has not actually failed to reach its destination. Three hours later, the link is restored, and (as soon as sendmail wakes up) the message is sent. Obviously, if Mary's page concerned a meeting that was supposed to happen 2 hours ago, there will be some minor administrative details to work out between Mary and Zaphod!

On the other hand, if Mary had used her SNPP client (or simply telnetted to the SNPP gateway), she would have immediately discovered the network problem. She would have decided to invoke plan "B" and call Zaphod's pager on the telephone, ringing him that way.

The obvious difference here is not page delivery, but the immediate notification of a problem that affects your message. Standard email and SMTP, while quite reliable in most cases, cannot be positively guaranteed between all nodes at all times, making it less desirable for emergency or urgent paging. This inability to guarantee delivery could, whether rightly or wrongly, place the service provider in an uncomfortable position with a client who has just received his or her emergency page, six hours too late.

Another advantage of using a separate protocol for paging delivery is that it gives the sender absolute flexibility over what is sent to the pager. For instance, in the paging arena, where messages are sent to alphanumeric pagers, it is less desirable to send the recipient general header lines from a standard SMTP message. Much of the information is useless, possibly redundant, and a waste of precious RF bandwidth.

Therefore, when implementing an SMTP gateway, the service provider should elect to parse out needed information (such as the sender, and possibly subject) such to maximize the utility of the transmission. Parsing generally means less control over content and format by the message originator. SNPP provides a clean, effective way to send a message, as written, to the recipient's pager.

The other consideration is the relative simplicity of the SNPP protocol for manual telnet sessions versus someone trying to manually hack a mail message into a gateway.

4. The SNPP Protocol

The SNPP protocol is a sequence of commands and replies, and is based on the philosophy of many other Internet protocols currently in use. SNPP has several input commands (the first 4 characters of each are significant) that solicit various server responses falling into four categories:

```
 2xx - Successful, continue
 3xx - Begin DATA input (see "DATA" command)
 4xx - Failed with connection terminated
 5xx - Failed, but continue session
```

The first character of every server response code is a digit indicating the category of response. The text portion of the response following the code may be altered to suit individual applications.

The session interaction is actually quite simple (hence the name). The client initiates the connection with the listening server. Upon opening the connection, the server issues a "220" level message (indicating the willingness of the server to accept SNPP commands). The client passes pager ID information, and a message, then issues a "SEND" command. The server then feeds the information to the paging terminal, gathers a response, and reports the success or failure to the client.

4.1 Examples of SNPP Transactions

The following illustrate examples of client-server communication using SNPP.

4.1.1 A Typical Level One Connection

```
          Client                          Server

 Open Connection              -->
                              <--  220 SNPP Gateway Ready
 PAGE 5551212                 -->
                              <--  250 Pager ID Accepted
 MESS Your network is hosed   -->
                              <--  250 Message OK
 SEND                         -->
                              <--  250 Message Sent OK
 QUIT                         -->
                              <--  221 OK, Goodbye
```

4.1.2 A Typical Level Two, Multiple Transaction

The following example illustrates a single message sent to two pagers. Using this level protocol, pager-specific options may be selected for each receiver by specifying the option prior to issuing the "PAGEr" command. In this example, an alternate coverage area is selected for the first pager, while delayed messaging is specified for the second.

```
          Client                          Server

 Open Connection              -->
                              <--  220 SNPP Server Ready
 COVE 2                       -->
                              <--  250 Alternate Area Selected
 PAGE 5551212 FOOBAR          -->
                              <--  250 Pager ID Accepted
 HOLD 9401152300 -0600        -->
                              <--  250 Delayed Message OK
 PAGE 5552323 XYZZY           -->
                              <--  250 Pager ID Accepted
 SUBJ Seattle Meeting         -->
                              <--  250 Message Subject OK
 DATA                         -->
                              <--  354 Begin Input, End With '.'
 Please meet me tomorrow at   -->
 the Seattle office           -->
                              <--  250 DATA Accepted
```

```
    SEND                        -->
                                <--  250 Message Sent OK
    QUIT                        -->
                                <--  221 OK, Goodbye
```

4.2 Level 1 Commands

Level one commands are designed as a minimum implementation of the protocol. This collection of commands may be used with either TAP/IXO or TME for message delivery to the paging terminal.

4.2.1 PAGEr <Pager ID>

The PAGEr command submits a pager ID (PID) number, for inclusion in the next messaging transaction. The PID used must reside in, and be validated by the paging terminal. Limited validation may optionally be done on the server (such as all numeric, and ID length), or validation can be left up to the terminal at the time the page is sent.

When implementing SNPP, the user may elect to support multiple recipients per message sent. However, be wary that validation-prior-to-sending is not possible with TAP/IXO (and is not an official option of the current TME specification). What this means is that in order to validate a PID, one must generate a message to the pager. The terminal responds favorably or negatively. When reporting failure of a single PID in a sequence, delineating and reporting the failure in a "standard format" may prove to be a challenge.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a PAGEr command are:

```
 250 Pager ID Accepted
 421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
 421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
 550 Error, Invalid Pager ID
 554 Error, failed (technical reason)
```

The level 2 enhancements affect the PAGEr command. Please refer to the appropriate section for details.

4.2.2 MESSage <Alpha or Numeric Message>

The MESSage command specifies a single-line message, into the gateway. Limited validation of the message may be done on the SNPP server (such as length), but type-of-message validation should be done by the paging terminal. Duplicating the MESSage command before SENDing the message should produce an "503 ERROR, Message Already

Entered" message, and allow the user to continue.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a MESSage command are:

```
 250 Message OK
 421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
 421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
 503 ERROR, Message Already Entered
 550 ERROR, Invalid Message
 554 Error, failed (technical reason)
```

4.2.3 RESEt

The RESEt command clears already entered information from the server session, resetting it to the state of a freshly opened connection. This is provided, primarily, as a means to reset accidentally entered information during a manual session.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a RESEt command are:

```
 250 RESET OK
 421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection
 421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
```

4.2.4 SEND

The SEND command finalizes the current message transaction, and processes the page to the paging terminal. Prior to processing, the PAGEr and MESSage fields (or message DATA when using the level two option) should be checked for the existence of information. Should one of these required fields be missing, the server should respond "503 Error, Incomplete Information" and allow the user to continue. Assuming that the information is complete, the SNPP server should format and send the page to the paging terminal, and await a response.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a SEND command are:

```
 250 Message Sent Successfully
 421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
 421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
 503 Error, Pager ID or Message Incomplete
 554 Message Failed [non-administrative reason]
```

Or, in the case of an illegal or non-existent pager ID, or some other administrative reason for rejecting the page, the server should respond:

550 Failed, Illegal Pager ID (or other explanation)

After processing a SEND command, the server should remain online to allow the client to submit another transaction.

4.2.5 QUIT

The QUIT command terminates the current session. The server should simply respond:

221 OK, Goodbye"

and close the connection.

4.2.6 HELP (optional)

The optional HELP command displays a screen of information about commands that are valid on the SNPP server. This is primarily to assist manual users of the gateway. Each line of the HELP screen (responses) are preceded by a code "214". At the end of the HELP sequence, a "250" series message is issued.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a HELP command are:

214 [Help Text] (repeated for each line of information)
250 End of Help Information
421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
500 Command Not Implemented

4.3 Level 2 - Minimum Extensions

This section specifies minimum enhancements to the SNPP protocol for added functionality.

4.3.1 DATA

The DATA command is an alternate form of the MESSage command, allowing for multiple line delivery of a message to the paging terminal. This command’s function is similar to the DATA command implemented in SMTP (Internet STD10, RFC821). The SNPP server should only allow one DATA or MESSage command to be issued prior to a SEND.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a DATA command are:

```
 354 Begin Input; End with <CRLF>'.'<CRLF>
 421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
 421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
 503 ERROR, Message Already Entered
 500 Command Not Implemented
 550 ERROR, failed (administrative reason)
 554 ERROR, failed (technical reason)
```

Upon receiving a "354" response, the client begins line input of the message to send to the pager. A single period ("."), in the first position of the line, terminates input. After input, the server may respond:

```
 250 Message OK
 421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
 421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
 550 ERROR, Invalid Message (or administrative reason)
 554 ERROR, Failed (technical reason)
```

4.4 Level 2 - Optional Extensions

This section discusses enhancements to the SNPP protocol for more control over paging functions. These are primarily designed to mirror the added functionality built into the Telocator Message Entry (TME) protocol as specified in the TDP protocol suite. These functions may, optionally (as is being done by the author), be integrated into a paging terminal. There is no requirement to implement all of these functions. Requests for invalid functions should return a "500 Function Not Implemented" error.

It is important to note that, at the time of this publication, the TME standard is still not finalized.

4.4.1 LOGIn <loginid> [password]

This command allows for a session login ID to be specified. It is used to validate the person attempting to access the paging terminal. If no LOGIn command is issued, "anonymous" user status is assumed.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a LOGIn command are:

```
 250 Login Accepted
 421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
 421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
```

421 Illegal Access Attempt
550 Error, Invalid LoginID or Password
554 Error, failed (technical reason)

4.4.2 PAGEr <PagerID> [Password/PIN]

This PAGEr command is an enhancement to the level one specification. The primary difference is the ability to specify a password or PIN for validation or feature access.

Before proceeding, it is important to understand the logical function of the PAGEr command with respect to the LEVEl, COVErage, HOLDtime, and ALERt commands (option parameters as described below). Each time a PAGEr command is issued, it should be thought of as the last step in a multiple step transaction.

When the PAGEr command is processed, the pager ID (and password) is submitted to the paging terminal with LEVEl, COVErage, HOLDtime, and ALERt. If these parameters have not been altered, then their defaults are assumed for the transaction. After the next PAGEr command has been processed, these option parameters are reset their defaults. Using this type of "option-option- option-go" scheme, it is possible to specify a different priority level for "Jeff," and an alternate coverage area for "Kathy," while sending the same message to each.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a PAGEr command are:

250 Pager ID Accepted
421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
550 Error, Invalid Pager ID or Password
554 Error, failed (technical reason)

4.4.3 LEVEl <ServiceLevel>

The LEVEl function is used to specify an optional alternate level of service for the next PAGEr command. Ideally, "ServiceLevel" should be an integer between 0 and 11 inclusive. The TME protocol specifies ServiceLevel as follows:

0 - Priority
1 - Normal (default)
2 - Five minutes
3 - Fifteen minutes
4 - One hour
5 - Four hours

6 - Twelve hours
7 - Twenty Four hours
8 - Carrier specific '1'
9 - Carrier specific '2'
10 - Carrier specific '3'
11 - Carrier specific '4'

The choice on how to implement this feature, or to what level it should be implemented, should be optional and up to the discretion of the carrier.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a LEVEl command are:

250 OK, Alternate Service Level Accepted
421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
500 Command Not Implemented
550 Error, Invalid Service Level Specified
554 Error, failed (technical reason)

4.4.4 ALERt <AlertOverride>

The optional ALERt command may be used to override the default setting and specify whether or not to alert the subscriber upon receipt of a message. This option, like the previous command, alters the parameters submitted to the paging terminal using the PAGEr command. The TME protocol specifies AlertOverride as either 0-DoNotAlert, or 1-Alert.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a ALERt command are:

250 OK, Alert Override Accepted
421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
500 Command Not Implemented
550 Error, Invalid Alert Parameter
554 Error, failed (technical reason)

4.4.5 COVErage <AlternateArea>

The optional COVErage command is used to override the subscriber's default coverage area, and allow for the selection of an alternate region. This option, like the previous command, alters the parameters submitted to the paging terminal using the PAGEr command. AlternateArea is a designator for one of the following:

- A subscriber-specific alternate coverage area
- A carrier-defined region available to subscribers

As an example, Mary Ghoti is a subscriber having local service in Chicago, Illinois (Mary's region '1'). Her account has been set up in such a manner as to allow Mary's pager to be paged nationwide upon demand (Mary's region '2'). Specifying "COVErage 2" prior to issuing the appropriate "PAGEr" command allows the default Chicago area to be overridden, and Mary's pager to be messaged nationally for that transaction. It is assumed that the carrier providing Mary's service will keep track of how many pages have been sent to her pager in this manner, and will bill her accordingly.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a COVErage command are:

250 Alternate Coverage Selected
421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
500 Command Not Implemented
550 Error, Invalid Alternate Region
554 Error, failed (technical reason)

4.4.6 HOLDuntil <YYMMDDHHMMSS> [+/-GMTdifference]

The HOLDuntil command allows for the delayed delivery of a message, to a particular subscriber, until after the time specified. The time may be specified in local time (e.g. local to the paging terminal), or with an added parameter specifying offset from GMT (in other words, "-0600" specifies Eastern Standard Time). This option, like the previous command, alters the parameters submitted to the paging terminal using the PAGEr command.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a HOLDuntil command are:

250 Delayed Messaging Selected
421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
500 Command Not Implemented
550 Error, Invalid Delivery Date/Time
554 Error, failed (technical reason)

4.4.7 CALLerid <CallerID>

The CALLerid function is a message-oriented function (as opposed to the subscriber-oriented functions just described). This allows for the specification of the CallerIdentifier function as described in

TME. This parameter is optional, and is at the discretion of the carrier as to how it should be implemented or used.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a CALLerid command are:

```
 250 Caller ID Accepted
 421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
 421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
 500 Command Not Implemented
 550 Error, Invalid Caller ID
 554 Error, failed (technical reason)
```

4.4.8 SUBJect <MessageSubject>

The SUBJect function allows is a message-oriented function that allows the sender to specify a subject for the next message to be sent. This parameter is optional and is at the discretion of the carrier as to how it should be implemented or used.

Possible responses from the SNPP server, with suggested text, in response to a SUBJect command are:

```
 250 Message Subject Accepted
 421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
 421 Gateway Service Unavailable (terminate connection)
 500 Command Not Implemented
 550 Error, Invalid Subject Option
 554 Error, failed (technical reason)
```

4.5 Illegal Commands

Should the client issue an illegal command, the server may respond in one of the two following ways:

```
 421 Too Many Errors, Goodbye (terminate connection)
 500 Command Not Implemented, Try Again
```

The number of illegal commands allowed before terminating the connection should be at the discretion of the operator of the SNPP server. The only response that has not been discussed is:

```
 421 SERVER DOWN, Goodbye
```

This is used to refuse or terminate connections when the gateway is administratively down, or when there is some other technical or administrative problem with the paging terminal.

4.6 Timeouts

The SNPP server can, optionally, have an inactivity timeout implemented. At the expiration of the allotted time, the server responds "421 Timeout, Goodbye" and closes the connection.

4.7 Rigidity of Command Structure

The commands from client to server should remain constant. However, since the first character of the response indicates success or failure, the text of the server responses could be altered to suit the tastes of the operator of the SNPP server. It is suggested that the response codes mirror SMTP response codes as closely as possible.

5. Revision History

Originally, when proposed, the author employed POP2 style result/response codes. The Internet community suggested that this '+' and '-' style theory be altered to provide numeric response codes -- similar to those used in other services such as SMTP. The protocol has been altered to this specification from the first proposed draft.

Administrative errors (Illegal Pager ID, for example) have been separated from technical errors (out-of-space on disk, for example). Administrative failures are generally preceded with a 550 series response, while technical failures bear a 554 series code.

Level two enhancements to the protocol have been added in preparation for TME deployment.

Error code "502 Command not implemented" was changed to a general "500 Command not recognized" failure result to closer follow SMTP.

6. Relationship to Other IETF Work

The strategy of this specification, and many of its details, were reviewed by an IETF Working Group and three IESG members. They concluded that an approach using the existing email infrastructure was preferable, due in large measure to the very high costs of deploying a new protocol and the advantages of using the Internet's most widely-distributed applications protocol infrastructure. Most reviewers felt that no new protocol was needed at all because the special "deliver immediately or fail" requirements of SNPP could be accomplished by careful configuration of clients and servers. The experimental network printing protocol [4] was identified as an example of an existing infrastructure approach to an existing problem. Other reviewers believed that a case could be made for new

protocol details to identify paging clients and servers to each other and negotiate details of the transactions, but that it would be sensible to handle those details as extensions to SMTP [1, 2] rather than deploying a new protocol structure.

The author, while recognizing these positions, believes that there is merit in a separate protocol to isolate details of TAP/IXO and its evolving successors from users and, indeed, from mail-based approaches that might reach systems that would act as SMTP/MIME [3] to SNPP gateways. Such systems and gateways are, indeed, undergoing design and development concurrent with this work. See the section "Why not just use Email and SMTP?" for additional discussion of the author's view of the classical electronic email approach.

7. References

[1] Postel, J., "Simple Mail Transfer Protocol", STD 10, RFC 821, USC/Information Sciences Institute, August 1982.

[2] Klensin, J., Freed, N., Rose, M., Stefferud, E., and D. Crocker, "SMTP Service Extensions", United Nations University, Innosoft, Dover Beach Consulting, Inc., Network Management Associates, Inc., The Branch Office, RFC 1425, February 1993.

[3] Borenstein, N., and N. Freed, "MIME (Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions) Part One: Mechanisms for Specifying and Describing the Format of Internet Message Bodies", RFC 1521, Bellcore, Innosoft, September 1993.

[4] Rose, M., and C. Malamud, "An Experiment in Remote Printing", RFC 1486, Dover Beach Consulting, Inc., Internet Multicasting Service, July 1993.

8. Security Considerations

Security issues are not discussed in this memo.

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