Equal Cost Multipath Load Sharing - Hardware ECMP

Cumulus Linux supports hardware-based equal cost multipath (ECMP) load sharing. ECMP is enabled by default in Cumulus Linux. Load sharing occurs automatically for all routes with multiple next hops installed. ECMP load sharing supports both IPv4 and IPv6 routes.

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Equal Cost Routing

ECMP operates only on equal cost routes in the Linux routing table.

In this example, the 10.1.1.0/24 route has two possible next hops that have been installed in the routing table:

```
$ ip route show 10.1.1.0/24
10.1.1.0/24 proto zebra metric 20
   nexthop via 192.168.1.1 dev swp1 weight 1 onlink
   nexthop via 192.168.2.1 dev swp2 weight 1 onlink
```

For routes to be considered equal they must:

- Originate from the same routing protocol. Routes from different sources are not considered equal. For example, a static route and an OSPF route are not considered for ECMP load sharing.
- Have equal cost. If two routes from the same protocol are unequal, only the best route is installed in the routing table.

The BGP maximum-paths setting is enabled, so multiple routes are installed by default. See the ECMP section of the BGP chapter for more information.

ECMP Hashing

Once multiple routes are installed in the routing table, a hash is used to determine which path a packet follows.

Cumulus Linux hashes on the following fields:

- IP protocol
- Ingress interface
- Source IPv4 or IPv6 address
- Destination IPv4 or IPv6 address

For TCP/UDP frames, Cumulus Linux also hashes on:

- Source port
- Destination port
To prevent out of order packets, ECMP hashing is done on a per-flow basis, which means that all packets with the same source and destination IP addresses and the same source and destination ports always hash to the same next hop. ECMP hashing does not keep a record of flow states.

ECMP hashing does not keep a record of packets that have hashed to each next hop and does not guarantee that traffic sent to each next hop is equal.

### Use cl-ecmpcalc to Determine the Hash Result

Since the hash is deterministic and always provides the same result for the same input, you can query the hardware and determine the hash result of a given input. This is useful when determining exactly which path a flow takes through a network.

On Cumulus Linux, use the `cl-ecmpcalc` command to determine a hardware hash result.

In order to use `cl-ecmpcalc`, all fields that are used in the hash must be provided. This includes ingress interface, layer 3 source IP, layer 3 destination IP, layer 4 source port and layer 4 destination port.

```
$ sudo cl-ecmpcalc -i swp1 -s 10.0.0.1 -d 10.0.0.1 -p tcp --sport 20000 --dport 80
ecmpcalc: will query hardware
swp3
```

If any field is omitted, `cl-ecmpcalc` fails.

```
$ sudo cl-ecmpcalc -i swp1 -s 10.0.0.1 -d 10.0.0.1 -p tcp
ecmpcalc: will query hardware
   [--dport DPORT] [-v] [-i IN_INTERFACE]
   [--sportid SPORTID] [--smoid SMODID] [-o OUT_INTERFACE]
   [--dportid DPORTID] [--dmodid DMODID] [--hardware]
   [-nohardware] [-hs HASHSEED]
   [-hf HASHFIELDS [HASHFIELDS ...]]
   [--hashfunction {crc16-ccitt,crc16-bisync}] [-e EGRESS]
   [-c MCOUNT]
cl-ecmpcalc: error: --sport and --dport required for TCP and UDP frames
```

### cl-ecmpcalc Limitations

`cl-ecmpcalc` can only take input interfaces that can be converted to a single physical port in the port tab file, like the physical switch ports (swp). Virtual interfaces like bridges, bonds, and subinterfaces are not supported.

`cl-ecmpcalc` is supported only on switches with the Mellanox Spectrum and the Broadcom Maverick, Tomahawk, Trident II, Trident II+ and Trident3 chipsets.

### ECMP Hash Buckets

When multiple routes are installed in the routing table, each route is assigned to an ECMP bucket. When the ECMP hash is executed the result of the hash determines which bucket gets used.

In the following example, 4 next hops exist. Three different flows are hashed to different hash buckets. Each next hop is assigned to a unique hash bucket.
Add a Next Hop

When a next hop is added, a new hash bucket is created. The assignment of next hops to hash buckets, as well as the hash result, may change when additional next hops are added.

Remove a Next Hop

When a next hop is removed, the remaining hash bucket assignments may change, again, potentially changing the next hop selected for an existing flow.
A next hop fails and the next hop and hash bucket are removed. The remaining next hops may be reassigned.

In most cases, the modification of hash buckets has no impact on traffic flows as traffic is being forward to a single end host. In deployments where multiple end hosts are using the same IP address (anycast), resilient hashing must be used.

**Configure a Hash Seed to Avoid Hash Polarization**

It is useful to have a unique hash seed for each switch. This helps avoid hash polarization, a type of network congestion that occurs when multiple data flows try to reach a switch using the same switch ports.

Starting in Cumulus Linux 3.5.4, if the `ecmp_hash_seed` value is not set in `/etc/cumulus/datapath/traffic.conf` (the default as shipped), `switchd` will use a randomly generated seed, which is stable across switchd restarts and reboots.

The hash seed is set by the `ecmp_hash_seed` parameter in the `/etc/cumulus/datapath/traffic.conf` file. It is an integer with a value from 0 to 4294967295. If you don't specify a value for it, `switchd` creates a randomly generated seed instead.

To set the hash seed to 50 for example, run the following commands:

```bash
cumulus@switch:~$ net add forwarding ecmp hash-seed 50
cumulus@switch:~$ net pending
cumulus@switch:~$ net commit
```
These commands create the following configuration in the `/etc/cumulus/datapath/traffic.conf` file:

```
cumulus@leaf01:~$ cat /etc/cumulus/datapath/traffic.conf
...
#Specify the hash seed for Equal cost multipath entries
ecmp_hash_seed = 50
...
cumulus@leaf01:~$
```

**Resilient Hashing**

In Cumulus Linux, when a next hop fails or is removed from an ECMP pool, the hashing or hash bucket assignment can change. For deployments where there is a need for flows to always use the same next hop, like TCP anycast deployments, this can create session failures.

The ECMP hash performed with resilient hashing is exactly the same as the default hashing mode. Only the method in which next hops are assigned to hash buckets differs.

Resilient hashing supports both IPv4 and IPv6 routes.

Resilient hashing is not enabled by default. See below for steps on configuring it.

Resilient hashing prevents disruptions when next hops are removed. It does not prevent disruption when next hops are added.

Resilient hashing is supported only on switches with the Broadcom Tomahawk, Trident II, Trident II+, and Trident3 as well as Mellanox Spectrum chipsets. You can run `net show system` to determine the chipset.

**Resilient Hash Buckets**

When resilient hashing is configured, a fixed number of buckets are defined. Next hops are then assigned in round robin fashion to each of those buckets. In this example, 12 buckets are created and four next hops are assigned.
Remove Next Hops

Unlike default ECMP hashing, when a next hop needs to be removed, the number of hash buckets does not change.

With 12 buckets assigned and four next hops, instead of reducing the number of buckets — which would impact flows to known good hosts — the remaining next hops replace the failed next hop.
After the failed next hop is removed, the remaining next hops are installed as replacements. This prevents impact to any flows that hash to working next hops.

Add Next Hops

Resilient hashing does not prevent possible impact to existing flows when new next hops are added. Due to the fact there are a fixed number of buckets, a new next hop requires reassigning next hops to buckets.

As a result, some flows may hash to new next hops, which can impact anycast deployments.

Configure Resilient Hashing

Resilient hashing is not enabled by default. When resilient hashing is enabled, 65,536 buckets are created to be shared among all ECMP groups. An ECMP group is a list of unique next hops that are referenced by multiple ECMP routes.

An ECMP route counts as a single route with multiple next hops. The following example is considered to be a single ECMP route:
$ ip route show 10.1.1.0/24
10.1.1.0/24  proto zebra  metric 20
    nexthop via 192.168.1.1 dev swp1 weight 1 onlink
    nexthop via 192.168.2.1 dev swp2 weight 1 onlink

All ECMP routes must use the same number of buckets (the number of buckets cannot be configured per ECMP route).

The number of buckets can be configured as 64, 128, 256, 512 or 1024; the default is 128:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Hash Buckets</th>
<th>Number of Supported ECMP Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>1024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>256</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>512</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1024</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A larger number of ECMP buckets reduces the impact on adding new next hops to an ECMP route. However, the system supports fewer ECMP routes. If the maximum number of ECMP routes have been installed, new ECMP routes log an error and are not installed.

To enable resilient hashing, edit `/etc/cumulus/datapath/traffic.conf`:

1. Enable resilient hashing:

   ```
   # Enable resilient hashing
   resilient_hash_enable = TRUE
   ```

2. (Optional) Edit the number of hash buckets:

   ```
   # Resilient hashing flowset entries per ECMP group
   # Valid values - 64, 128, 256, 512, 1024
   resilient_hash_entries_ecmp = 256
   ```

3. Restart the `switchd` service:

   ```
   cumulus@switch:~$ sudo systemctl restart switchd.service
   ```