

# Overview

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# Licensing Requirements

For a complete explanation of Cisco NX-OS licensing recommendations and how to obtain and apply licenses, see the *Cisco NX-OS Licensing Guide*.

# Layer 2 Ethernet Switching Overview

### Layer 2 Ethernet Switching Overview

The device supports simultaneous, parallel connections between Layer 2 Ethernet segments. Switched connections between Ethernet segments last only for the duration of the packet. New connections can be made between different segments for the next packet.

The device solves congestion problems caused by high-bandwidth devices and a large number of users by assigning each device (for example, a server) to its own collision domain. Because each LAN port connects to a separate Ethernet collision domain, servers in a switched environment achieve full access to the bandwidth.

# VLANs

A VLAN is a switched network that is logically segmented by function, project team, or application, without regard to the physical locations of the users. VLANs have the same attributes as physical LANs, but you can group end stations even if they are not physically located on the same LAN segment.

Any switch port can belong to a VLAN, and unicast, broadcast, and multicast packets are forwarded and flooded only to end stations in that VLAN. Each VLAN is considered as a logical network, and packets destined for stations that do not belong to the VLAN must be forwarded through a bridge or a router.

All ports are assigned to the default VLAN (VLAN1) when the device first comes up. A VLAN interface, or switched virtual interface (SVI), is a Layer 3 interface that is created to provide communication between VLANs.

The devices support a maximum of 251 VLANs (the range is from 1 to 4095) in accordance with the IEEE 802.1Q standard.

**Note** Inter-Switch Link (ISL) trunking is not supported on the Cisco NX-OS.

# Spanning Tree

This section discusses the implementation of the Spanning Tree Protocol (STP) on the software. Spanning tree is used to refer to IEEE 802.1w and IEEE 802.1s. When the IEEE 802.1D Spanning Tree Protocol is referred to in the publication, 802.1D is stated specifically.

## STP Overview

STP provides a loop-free network at the Layer 2 level. Layer 2 LAN ports send and receive STP frames, which are called Bridge Protocol Data Units (BPDUs), at regular intervals. Network devices do not forward these frames but use the frames to construct a loop-free path.

802.1D is the original standard for STP, and many improvements have enhanced the basic loop-free STP. Additionally, the entire standard was reworked to make the loop-free convergence process faster to keep up with the faster equipment.

Finally, the 802.1s standard, Multiple Spanning Trees (MST), allows you to map multiple VLANs into a single spanning tree instance. Each instance runs an independent spanning tree topology.

Although the software can interoperate with legacy 802.1D systems, the system runs MST. MST is the default STP protocol for Cisco Nexus devices.

In addition, Cisco has created some proprietary features to enhance the spanning tree activities.

## Rapid PVST+

Rapid PVST+ is the default spanning tree mode for the software and is enabled by default on the default VLAN and all newly created VLANs.

A single instance, or topology, of RSTP runs on each configured VLAN, and each Rapid PVST+ instance on a VLAN has a single root device. You can enable and disable STP on a per-VLAN basis when you are running Rapid PVST+.

## MST

MST is the default spanning tree mode for the software and is enabled by default on the default VLAN and all newly created VLANs.

The multiple independent spanning tree topologies enabled by MST provide multiple forwarding paths for data traffic, enable load balancing, and reduce the number of STP instances required to support a large number of VLANs.

MST incorporates RSTP, so it also allows rapid convergence. MST improves the fault tolerance of the network because a failure in one instance (forwarding path) does not affect other instances (forwarding paths).

**Note** Changing the spanning tree mode disrupts the traffic because all spanning tree instances are stopped for the previous mode and started for the new mode.

You can force specified interfaces to send prestandard, rather than standard, MST messages using the command-line interface.

## STP Extensions

The software supports the following Cisco proprietary features:

- Spanning tree port types—The default spanning tree port type is normal. You can configure interfaces connected to Layer 2 hosts as edge ports and interfaces connected to Layer 2 switches or bridges as network ports.
- Bridge Assurance—Once you configure a port as a network port, Bridge Assurance sends BPDUs on all ports and moves a port into the blocking state if it no longer receives BPDUs. This enhancement is available only when you are running MST.
- BPDU Guard—BPDU Guard shuts down the port if that port receives a BPDU.
- BPDU Filter—BPDU Filter suppresses sending and receiving BPDUs on the port.
- Loop Guard—Loop Guard helps prevent bridging loops that could occur because of a unidirectional link failure on a point-to-point link.
- Root Guard—STP root guard prevents a port from becoming root port or blocked port. If a port configured for root guard receives a superior BPDU, the port immediately goes to the root-inconsistent (blocked) state.

# Related Topics

The following documents are related to the Layer 2 switching features:

- *Cisco Nexus® 3550-T Interfaces Configuration Guide*
- *Cisco Nexus® 3550-T Security Configuration Guide*
- *Cisco Nexus® 3550-T System Management Configuration Guide*

## Related Topics