



# **Use SMB signing to enhance network security**

**ONTAP 9**

NetApp  
January 26, 2023

# Table of Contents

- Use SMB signing to enhance network security ..... 1
  - Use SMB signing to enhance network security overview..... 1
  - How SMB signing policies affect communication with a CIFS server ..... 1
  - Performance impact of SMB signing ..... 3
  - Recommendations for configuring SMB signing ..... 3
  - Guidelines for SMB signing when multiple data LIFS are configured ..... 4
  - Enable or disable required SMB signing for incoming SMB traffic..... 4
  - Determine whether SMB sessions are signed ..... 6
  - Monitor SMB signed session statistics..... 7

# Use SMB signing to enhance network security

## Use SMB signing to enhance network security overview

SMB signing helps to ensure that network traffic between the SMB server and the client is not compromised; it does this by preventing replay attacks. By default, ONTAP supports SMB signing when requested by the client. Optionally, the storage administrator can configure the SMB server to require SMB signing.

## How SMB signing policies affect communication with a CIFS server

In addition to the CIFS server SMB signing security settings, two SMB signing policies on Windows clients control the digital signing of communications between clients and the CIFS server. You can configure the setting that meets your business requirements.

Client SMB policies are controlled through Windows local security policy settings, which are configured by using the Microsoft Management Console (MMC) or Active Directory GPOs. For more information about client SMB signing and security issues, see the Microsoft Windows documentation.

Here are descriptions of the two SMB signing policies on Microsoft clients:

- `Microsoft network client: Digitally sign communications (if server agrees)`

This setting controls whether the client's SMB signing capability is enabled. It is enabled by default. When this setting is disabled on the client, the client communications with the CIFS server depends on the SMB signing setting on the CIFS server.

- `Microsoft network client: Digitally sign communications (always)`

This setting controls whether the client requires SMB signing to communicate with a server. It is disabled by default. When this setting is disabled on the client, SMB signing behavior is based on the policy setting for `Microsoft network client: Digitally sign communications (if server agrees)` and the setting on the CIFS server.



If your environment includes Windows clients configured to require SMB signing, you must enable SMB signing on the CIFS server. If you do not, the CIFS server cannot serve data to these systems.

The effective results of client and CIFS server SMB signing settings depends on whether the SMB sessions uses SMB 1.0 or SMB 2.x and later.

The following table summarizes the effective SMB signing behavior if the session uses SMB 1.0:

| Client                            | ONTAP—signing not required | ONTAP—signing required |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Signing disabled and not required | Not signed                 | Signed                 |

| Client                           | ONTAP—signing not required | ONTAP—signing required |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Signing enabled and not required | Not signed                 | Signed                 |
| Signing disabled and required    | Signed                     | Signed                 |
| Signing enabled and required     | Signed                     | Signed                 |



Older Windows SMB 1 clients and some non-Windows SMB 1 clients might fail to connect if signing is disabled on the client but required on the CIFS server.

The following table summarizes the effective SMB signing behavior if the session uses SMB 2.x or SMB 3.0:



For SMB 2.x and SMB 3.0 clients, SMB signing is always enabled. It cannot be disabled.

| Client               | ONTAP—signing not required | ONTAP—signing required |
|----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Signing not required | Not signed                 | Signed                 |
| Signing required     | Signed                     | Signed                 |

The following table summarizes the default Microsoft client and server SMB signing behavior:

| Protocol | Hash algorithm | Can enable/disable | Can require/not require | Client default         | Server default          | DC default |
|----------|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| SMB 1.0  | MD5            | Yes                | Yes                     | Enabled (not required) | Disabled (not required) | Required   |
| SMB 2.x  | HMAC SHA-256   | No                 | Yes                     | Not required           | Not required            | Required   |
| SMB 3.0  | AES-CMAC.      | No                 | Yes                     | Not required           | Not required            | Required   |



Microsoft no longer recommends using Digitally sign communications (if client agrees) or Digitally sign communications (if server agrees) Group Policy settings. Microsoft also no longer recommends using the EnableSecuritySignature registry settings. These options only affect the SMB 1 behavior and can be replaced by the Digitally sign communications (always) Group Policy setting or the RequireSecuritySignature registry setting. You can also get more information from the Microsoft Blog <http://blogs.technet.com/b/josebda/archive/2010/12/01/the-basics-of-smb-signing-covering-both-smb1-and-smb2.aspx> [The Basics of SMB Signing (covering both SMB1 and SMB2)]

## Performance impact of SMB signing

When SMB sessions use SMB signing, all SMB communications to and from Windows clients experience a performance impact, which affects both the clients and the server (that is, the nodes on the cluster running the SVM containing the SMB server).

The performance impact shows as increased CPU usage on both the clients and the server, although the amount of network traffic does not change.

The extent of the performance impact depends on the version of ONTAP 9 you are running. Beginning with ONTAP 9.7, a new encryption off-load algorithm can enable better performance in signed SMB traffic. SMB signing offload is enabled by default when SMB signing is enabled.

Enhanced SMB signing performance requires AES-NI offload capability. See the Hardware Universe (HWU) to verify that AES-NI offload is supported for your platform.

Further performance improvements are also possible if you are able to use SMB version 3.11 (supported with Windows 10 and Windows Server 2016), which supports the much faster GCM algorithm.

Depending on your network, ONTAP 9 version, SMB version, and SVM implementation, the performance impact of SMB signing can vary widely; you can verify it only through testing in your network environment.

Most Windows clients negotiate SMB signing by default if it is enabled on the server. If you require SMB protection for some of your Windows clients, and if SMB signing is causing performance issues, you can disable SMB signing on any of your Windows clients that do not require protection against replay attacks. For information about disabling SMB signing on Windows clients, see the Microsoft Windows documentation.

## Recommendations for configuring SMB signing

You can configure SMB signing behavior between SMB clients and the CIFS server to meet your security requirements. The settings you choose when configuring SMB signing on your CIFS server are dependent on what your security requirements are.

You can configure SMB signing on either the client or the CIFS server. Consider the following recommendations when configuring SMB signing:

| If...  | Recommendation...   |
|--|---|
| You want to increase the security of the communication between the client and the server | Make SMB signing required at the client by enabling the <code>Require Option (Sign always)</code> security setting on the client. |
| You want all SMB traffic to a certain storage virtual machine (SVM) signed               | Make SMB signing required on the CIFS server by configuring the security settings to require SMB signing.                         |

See Microsoft documentation for more information on configuring Windows client security settings.

# Guidelines for SMB signing when multiple data LIFS are configured

If you enable or disable required SMB signing on the SMB server, you should be aware of the guidelines for multiple data LIFS configurations for an SVM.

When you configure a SMB server, there might be multiple data LIFs configured. If so, the DNS server contains multiple A record entries for the CIFS server, all using the same SMB server host name, but each with a unique IP address. For example, a SMB server that has two data LIFs configured might have the following DNS A record entries:

```
10.1.1.128 A VS1.IEPUB.LOCAL VS1
10.1.1.129 A VS1.IEPUB.LOCAL VS1
```

The normal behavior is that upon changing the required SMB signing setting, only new connections from clients are affected by the change in the SMB signing setting. However, there is an exception to this behavior. There is a case where a client has an existing connection to a share, and the client creates a new connection to the same share after the setting is changed, while maintaining the original connection. In this case, both the new and the existing SMB connection adopt the new SMB signing requirements.

Consider the following example:

1. Client1 connects to a share without required SMB signing using the path `O:\`.
2. The storage administrator modifies the SMB server configuration to require SMB signing.
3. Client1 connects to the same share with required SMB signing using the path `S:\` (while maintaining the connection using the path `O:\`).
4. The result is that SMB signing is used when accessing data over both the `O:\` and `S:\` drives.

## Enable or disable required SMB signing for incoming SMB traffic

You can enforce the requirement for clients to sign SMB messages by enabling required SMB signing. If enabled, ONTAP accepts SMB messages only if they have valid signatures. If you want to permit SMB signing, but not require it, you can disable required SMB signing.

### About this task

By default, required SMB signing is disabled. You can enable or disable required SMB signing at any time.

SMB signing is not disabled by default under the following circumstances:



1. Required SMB signing is enabled, and the cluster is reverted to a version of ONTAP that does not support SMB signing.
2. The cluster is subsequently upgraded to a version of ONTAP that supports SMB signing.

Under these circumstances, the SMB signing configuration that was originally configured on a supported version of ONTAP is retained through reversion and subsequent upgrade.

When you set up a storage virtual machine (SVM) disaster recovery relationship, the value that you select for the `-identity-preserve` option of the `snapmirror create` command determines the configuration details that are replicated in the destination SVM.

If you set the `-identity-preserve` option to `true` (ID-preserve), the SMB signing security setting is replicated to the destination.

If you set the `-identity-preserve` option to `false` (non-ID-preserve), the SMB signing security setting is not replicated to the destination. In this case, the CIFS server security settings on the destination are set to the default values. If you have enabled required SMB signing on the source SVM, you must manually enable required SMB signing on the destination SVM.

### Steps

1. Perform one of the following actions:

| If you want required SMB signing to be... | Enter the command...   |
|---|--|
| Enabled                                   | <code>vserver cifs security modify -vserver vserver_name -is-signing-required true</code>  |
| Disabled                                  | <code>vserver cifs security modify -vserver vserver_name -is-signing-required false</code> |

2. Verify that required SMB signing is enabled or disabled by determining whether the value in the `Is Signing Required` field in the output of the following command is set to the desired value: `vserver cifs security show -vserver vserver_name -fields is-signing-required`

### Example

The following example enables required SMB signing for SVM vs1:

```
cluster1::> vserver cifs security modify -vserver vs1 -is-signing-required true

cluster1::> vserver cifs security show -vserver vs1 -fields is-signing-required
vserver  is-signing-required
-----  -----
vs1      true
```

## Determine whether SMB sessions are signed

You can display information about connected SMB sessions on the CIFS server. You can use this information to determine whether SMB sessions are signed. This can be helpful in determining whether SMB client sessions are connecting with the desired security settings.

### Steps

1. Perform one of the following actions:

| If you want display information about...                           | Enter the command...   |
|--|--|
| All signed sessions on a specified storage virtual machine (SVM)   | <code>vserver cifs session show -vserver vserver_name -is-session-signed true</code>       |
| Details for a signed session with a specific session ID on the SVM | <code>vserver cifs session show -vserver vserver_name -session-id integer -instance</code> |

### Examples

The following command displays session information about signed sessions on SVM vs1. The default summary output does not display the “Is Session Signed” output field:

```
cluster1::> vserver cifs session show -vserver vs1 -is-session-signed true
Node:      nodel
Vserver:   vs1
Connection Session
ID          ID          Workstation      Windows User      Open      Idle
-----
3151272279  1          10.1.1.1        DOMAIN\joe        2         23s
```

The following command displays detailed session information, including whether the session is signed, on an SMB session with a session ID of 2:



```
cluster1::> vserver cifs session show -vserver vs1 -session-id 2 -instance
Node: node1
Vserver: vs1
Session ID: 2
Connection ID: 3151274158
Incoming Data LIF IP Address: 10.2.1.1
Workstation: 10.1.1.2
Authentication Mechanism: Kerberos
Windows User: DOMAIN\joe
UNIX User: pcuser
Open Shares: 1
Open Files: 1
Open Other: 0
Connected Time: 10m 43s
Idle Time: 1m 19s
Protocol Version: SMB3
Continuously Available: No
Is Session Signed: true
User Authenticated as: domain-user
NetBIOS Name: CIFS_ALIAS1
SMB Encryption Status: Unencrypted
```

#### Related information

[Monitoring SMB signed session statistics](#)

## Monitor SMB signed session statistics

You can monitor SMB sessions statistics and determine which established sessions are signed and which are not.

#### About this task

The `statistics` command at the advanced privilege level provides the `signed_sessions` counter that you can use to monitor the number of signed SMB sessions. The `signed_sessions` counter is available with the following statistics objects:

- `cifs` enables you to monitor SMB signing for all SMB sessions.
- `smb1` enables you to monitor SMB signing for SMB 1.0 sessions.
- `smb2` enables you to monitor SMB signing for SMB 2.x and SMB 3.0 sessions.

SMB 3.0 statistics are included in the output for the `smb2` object.

If you want to compare the number of signed session to the total number of sessions, you can compare output for the `signed_sessions` counter with the output for the `established_sessions` counter.

You must start a statistics sample collection before you can view the resultant data. You can view data from the

sample if you do not stop data collection. Stopping data collection gives you a fixed sample. Not stopping data collection gives you the ability to get updated data that you can use to compare against previous queries. The comparison can help you identify trends.

**Steps**

- 1. Set the privilege level to advanced:  
`set -privilege advanced`
- 2. Start a data collection:  
`statistics start -object {cifs|smb1|smb2} -instance instance -sample-id sample_ID [-node node_name]`

If you do not specify the `-sample-id` parameter, the command generates a sample identifier for you and defines this sample as the default sample for the CLI session. The value for `-sample-id` is a text string. If you run this command during the same CLI session and do not specify the `-sample-id` parameter, the command overwrites the previous default sample.

You can optionally specify the node on which you want to collect statistics. If you do not specify the node, the sample collects statistics for all nodes in the cluster.

- 3. Use the `statistics stop` command to stop collecting data for the sample.
- 4. View SMB signing statistics:

| If you want to view information for...   | Enter...  |
|--|---|
| Signed sessions                          | <code>show -sample-id <i>sample_ID</i> -counter signed_sessions <i>node_name</i> [-node <i>node_name</i>]</code>                      |
| Signed sessions and established sessions | <code>show -sample-id <i>sample_ID</i> -counter signed_sessions established_sessions <i>node_name</i> [-node <i>node_name</i>]</code> |

If you want to display information for only a single node, specify the optional `-node` parameter.

- 5. Return to the admin privilege level:  
`set -privilege admin`

## Examples

The following example shows how you can monitor SMB 2.x and SMB 3.0 signing statistics on storage virtual machine (SVM) vs1.

The following command moves to the advanced privilege level:

```
cluster1::> set -privilege advanced
```

```
Warning: These advanced commands are potentially dangerous; use them  
only when directed to do so by support personnel.
```

```
Do you want to continue? {y|n}: y
```

The following command starts data collection for a new sample:

```
cluster1::*> statistics start -object smb2 -sample-id smbsigning_sample  
-vserver vs1
```

```
Statistics collection is being started for Sample-id: smbsigning_sample
```

The following command stops the data collection for the sample:

```
cluster1::*> statistics stop -sample-id smbsigning_sample
```

```
Statistics collection is being stopped for Sample-id: smbsigning_sample
```

The following command shows signed SMB sessions and established SMB sessions by node from the sample:

```
cluster1::*> statistics show -sample-id smbSigning_sample -counter
signed_sessions|established_sessions|node_name
```

Object: smb2

Instance: vs1

Start-time: 2/6/2013 01:00:00

End-time: 2/6/2013 01:03:04

Cluster: cluster1

| Counter              | Value |
|----------------------|-------|
| -----                | ----- |
| established_sessions | 0     |
| node_name            | node1 |
| signed_sessions      | 0     |
| established_sessions | 1     |
| node_name            | node2 |
| signed_sessions      | 1     |
| established_sessions | 0     |
| node_name            | node3 |
| signed_sessions      | 0     |
| established_sessions | 0     |
| node_name            | node4 |
| signed_sessions      | 0     |

The following command shows signed SMB sessions for node2 from the sample:

```
cluster1::*> statistics show -sample-id smbSigning_sample -counter
signed_sessions|node_name -node node2
```

Object: smb2

Instance: vs1

Start-time: 2/6/2013 01:00:00

End-time: 2/6/2013 01:22:43

Cluster: cluster1

| Counter         | Value |
|-----------------|-------|
| -----           | ----- |
| node_name       | node2 |
| signed_sessions | 1     |

The following command moves back to the admin privilege level:

```
cluster1::*> set -privilege admin
```

**Related information**

[Determining whether SMB sessions are signed](#)

[Performance monitoring and management overview](#)

## Copyright information

Copyright © 2023 NetApp, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Printed in the U.S. No part of this document covered by copyright may be reproduced in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or storage in an electronic retrieval system—without prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Software derived from copyrighted NetApp material is subject to the following license and disclaimer:

THIS SOFTWARE IS PROVIDED BY NETAPP “AS IS” AND WITHOUT ANY EXPRESS OR IMPLIED WARRANTIES, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY AND FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, WHICH ARE HEREBY DISCLAIMED. IN NO EVENT SHALL NETAPP BE LIABLE FOR ANY DIRECT, INDIRECT, INCIDENTAL, SPECIAL, EXEMPLARY, OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, PROCUREMENT OF SUBSTITUTE GOODS OR SERVICES; LOSS OF USE, DATA, OR PROFITS; OR BUSINESS INTERRUPTION) HOWEVER CAUSED AND ON ANY THEORY OF LIABILITY, WHETHER IN CONTRACT, STRICT LIABILITY, OR TORT (INCLUDING NEGLIGENCE OR OTHERWISE) ARISING IN ANY WAY OUT OF THE USE OF THIS SOFTWARE, EVEN IF ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

NetApp reserves the right to change any products described herein at any time, and without notice. NetApp assumes no responsibility or liability arising from the use of products described herein, except as expressly agreed to in writing by NetApp. The use or purchase of this product does not convey a license under any patent rights, trademark rights, or any other intellectual property rights of NetApp.

The product described in this manual may be protected by one or more U.S. patents, foreign patents, or pending applications.

LIMITED RIGHTS LEGEND: Use, duplication, or disclosure by the government is subject to restrictions as set forth in subparagraph (b)(3) of the Rights in Technical Data -Noncommercial Items at DFARS 252.227-7013 (FEB 2014) and FAR 52.227-19 (DEC 2007).

Data contained herein pertains to a commercial product and/or commercial service (as defined in FAR 2.101) and is proprietary to NetApp, Inc. All NetApp technical data and computer software provided under this Agreement is commercial in nature and developed solely at private expense. The U.S. Government has a non-exclusive, non-transferrable, nonsublicensable, worldwide, limited irrevocable license to use the Data only in connection with and in support of the U.S. Government contract under which the Data was delivered. Except as provided herein, the Data may not be used, disclosed, reproduced, modified, performed, or displayed without the prior written approval of NetApp, Inc. United States Government license rights for the Department of Defense are limited to those rights identified in DFARS clause 252.227-7015(b) (FEB 2014).

## Trademark information

NETAPP, the NETAPP logo, and the marks listed at <http://www.netapp.com/TM> are trademarks of NetApp, Inc. Other company and product names may be trademarks of their respective owners.