README..txt
This directory attempts to document the ABI between the Linux kernel and
userspace, and the relative stability of these interfaces. Due to the
everchanging nature of Linux, and the differing maturity levels, these
interfaces should be used by userspace programs in different ways.

We have four different levels of ABI stability, as shown by the four
different subdirectories in this location. Interfaces may change levels
of stability according to the rules described below.

The different levels of stability are:

   stable/
          This directory documents the interfaces that the developer has
          defined to be stable. Userspace programs are free to use these
          interfaces with no restrictions, and backward compatibility for
          them will be guaranteed for at least 2 years. Most interfaces
          (like syscalls) are expected to never change and always be
          available.

   testing/
          This directory documents interfaces that are felt to be stable,
          as the main development of this interface has been completed.
          The interface can be changed to add new features, but the
          current interface will not break by doing this, unless grave
          errors or security problems are found in them. Userspace
          programs can start to rely on these interfaces, but they must be
          aware of changes that can occur before these interfaces move to
          be marked stable. Programs that use these interfaces are
          strongly encouraged to add their name to the description of
          these interfaces, so that the kernel developers can easily
          notify them if any changes occur (see the description of the
          layout of the files below for details on how to do this.)

   obsolete/
          This directory documents interfaces that are still remaining in
          the kernel, but are marked to be removed at some later point in
          time. The description of the interface will document the reason
          why it is obsolete and when it can be expected to be removed.
          The file Documentation/feature-removal-schedule.txt may describe
          some of these interfaces, giving a schedule for when they will
          be removed.

   removed/
          This directory contains a list of the old interfaces that have
          been removed from the kernel.

Every file in these directories will contain the following information:

What: Short description of the interface
Date: Date created
KernelVersion: Kernel version this feature first showed up in.
Contact: Primary contact for this interface (may be a mailing list)
Description: Long description of the interface and how to use it.
Users: All users of this interface who wish to be notified when
                 it changes. This is very important for interfaces in
                 the "testing" stage, so that kernel developers can work

with userspace developers to ensure that things do not
break in ways that are unacceptable. It is also
important to get feedback for these interfaces to make
sure they are working in a proper way and do not need to
be changed further.

How things move between levels:

Interfaces in stable may move to obsolete, as long as the proper
notification is given.

Interfaces may be removed from obsolete and the kernel as long as the
documented amount of time has gone by.

Interfaces in the testing state can move to the stable state when the
developers feel they are finished. They cannot be removed from the
kernel tree without going through the obsolete state first.

It's up to the developer to place their interfaces in the category they
wish for it to start out in.