



Requirements and guidelines

ONTAP 9

NetApp
April 06, 2024

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Requirements and guidelines

BranchCache version support

You should be aware of which BranchCache versions ONTAP supports.

ONTAP supports BranchCache 1 and the enhanced BranchCache 2:

- When you configure BranchCache on the SMB server for the storage virtual machine (SVM), you can enable BranchCache 1, BranchCache 2, or all versions.

By default, all versions are enabled.

- If you enable only BranchCache 2, the remote office Windows client machines must support BranchCache 2.

Only SMB 3.0 or later clients support BranchCache 2.

For more information about BranchCache versions, see the Microsoft TechNet Library.

Related information

[Microsoft TechNet Library: technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/](https://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/)

Network protocol support requirements

You must be aware of the network protocol requirements for implementing ONTAP BranchCache.

You can implement the ONTAP BranchCache feature over IPv4 and IPv6 networks using SMB 2.1 or later.

All CIFS servers and branch office machines participating in the BranchCache implementation must have the SMB 2.1 or later protocol enabled. SMB 2.1 has protocol extensions that allow a client to participate in a BranchCache environment. This is the minimum SMB protocol version that offers BranchCache support. SMB 2.1 supports version BranchCache version 1.

If you want to use BranchCache version 2, SMB 3.0 is the minimum supported version. All CIFS servers and branch office machines participating in a BranchCache 2 implementation must have SMB 3.0 or later enabled.

If you have remote offices where some of the clients support only SMB 2.1 and some of the clients support SMB 3.0, you can implement a BranchCache configuration on the CIFS server that provides caching support over both BranchCache 1 and BranchCache 2.



Even though the Microsoft BranchCache feature supports using both the HTTP/HTTPS and SMB protocols as file access protocols, ONTAP BranchCache only supports the use of SMB.

ONTAP and Windows hosts version requirements

ONTAP and branch office Windows hosts must meet certain version requirements before you can configure BranchCache.

Before configuring BranchCache, you must ensure that the version of ONTAP on the cluster and participating branch office clients support SMB 2.1 or later and support the BranchCache feature. If you configure Hosted Cache mode, you must also ensure that you use a supported host for the cache server.

BranchCache 1 is supported on the following ONTAP versions and Windows hosts:

- Content server: storage virtual machine (SVM) with ONTAP
- Cache server: Windows Server 2008 R2 or Windows Server 2012 or later
- Peer or client: Windows 7 Enterprise, Windows 7 Ultimate, Windows 8, Windows Server 2008 R2 or Windows Server 2012 or later

BranchCache 2 is supported on the following ONTAP versions and Windows hosts:

- Content server: SVM with ONTAP
- Cache server: Windows Server 2012 or later
- Peer or client: Windows 8 or Windows Server 2012 or later

Reasons ONTAP invalidates BranchCache hashes

Understanding the reasons why ONTAP invalidates hashes can be helpful as you plan your BranchCache configuration. It can help you decide which operating mode you should configure and can help you choose on which shares to enable BranchCache.

ONTAP must manage BranchCache hashes to ensure that hashes are valid. If a hash is not valid, ONTAP invalidates the hash and computes a new hash the next time that content is requested, assuming that BranchCache is still enabled.

ONTAP invalidates hashes for the following reasons:

- The server key is modified.

If the server key is modified, ONTAP invalidates all hashes in the hash store.

- A hash is flushed from the cache because the BranchCache hash store maximum size has been reached.

This is a tunable parameter and can be modified to meet your business requirements.

- A file is modified either through SMB or NFS access.
- A file for which there are computed hashes is restored using the `snap restore` command.
- A volume that contains SMB shares that are BranchCache-enabled is restored using the `snap restore` command.

Guidelines for choosing the hash store location

When configuring BranchCache, you choose where to store hashes and what size the hash store should be. Understanding the guidelines when choosing the hash store location and size can help you plan your BranchCache configuration on a CIFS-enabled SVM.

- You should locate the hash store on a volume where atime updates are permitted.

The access time on a hash file is used to keep frequently accessed files in the hash store. If atime updates are disabled, the creation time is used for this purpose. It is preferable to use atime to track frequently used files.

- You cannot store hashes on read-only file systems such as SnapMirror destinations and SnapLock volumes.
- If the maximum size of the hash store is reached, older hashes are flushed to make room for new hashes.

You can increase the maximum size of the hash store to reduce the amount of hashes that are flushed from the cache.

- If the volume on which you store hashes is unavailable or full, or if there is an issue with intra-cluster communication where the BranchCache service cannot retrieve hash information, BranchCache services are not available.

The volume might be unavailable because it is offline or because the storage administrator specified a new location for the hash store.

This does not cause issues with file access. If access to the hash store is impeded, ONTAP returns a Microsoft-defined error to the client, which causes the client to request the file using the normal SMB read request.

Related information

[Configure BranchCache on the SMB server](#)

[Modify the BranchCache configuration](#)

BranchCache recommendations

Before you configure BranchCache, there are certain recommendations you should keep in mind when deciding on which SMB shares you want to enable BranchCache caching.

You should keep the following recommendations in mind when deciding on which operating mode to use and on which SMB shares to enable BranchCache:

- The benefits of BranchCache are reduced when the data to be remotely cached changes frequently.
- BranchCache services are beneficial for shares containing file content that is reused by multiple remote office clients or by file content that is repeatedly accessed by a single remote user.
- Consider enabling caching for read-only content such as data in Snapshot copies and SnapMirror destinations.

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