



Configuring Cisco Express Forwarding

This chapter describes Cisco Express Forwarding (CEF) on the Catalyst 4000 family switch. It also provides guidelines, procedures, and examples to configure this feature.

This chapter includes the following major sections:

- [Overview of CEF, page 19-1](#)
- [Catalyst 4000 Implementation of CEF, page 19-3](#)
- [CEF Configuration Restrictions, page 19-6](#)
- [Configuring CEF, page 19-6](#)
- [Monitoring and Maintaining CEF, page 19-9](#)



Note

For complete syntax and usage information for the switch commands used in this chapter, refer to the *Cisco IOS Command Reference- Software Release 12.1(12c)EW* and the publications at: <http://www.cisco.com/univercd/cc/td/doc/product/software/ios121/121cgcr/index.htm>

Overview of CEF

CEF is advanced Layer 3 IP switching technology that optimizes performance and scalability for large networks with dynamic traffic patterns or networks with intensive web-based applications and interactive sessions.

CEF provides the following benefits:

- Improves performance over the caching schemes of multilayer switches, which often flush the entire cache when information changes in the routing tables.
- Provides load balancing that distributes packets across multiple links based on Layer 3 routing information. If a network device discovers multiple paths to a destination, the routing table is updated with multiple entries for that destination. Traffic to that destination is then distributed among the various paths.

CEF Components

CEF stores information in several data structures rather than the route cache of multilayer switches. The data structures optimize lookup for efficient packet forwarding. Two primary components comprise the CEF operation:

- [Forwarding Information Base](#)
- [Adjacency Tables](#)

Forwarding Information Base

The Forwarding Information Base (FIB) is a table that contains a copy of the forwarding information in the IP routing table. When routing or topology changes occur in the network, the route processor updates the IP routing table and CEF updates the FIB. Because there is a one-to-one correlation between FIB entries and routing table entries, the FIB contains all known routes and eliminates the need for route cache maintenance that is associated with switching paths, such as fast switching and optimum switching. CEF uses the FIB to make IP destination-based switching decisions and maintain next-hop address information based on the information in the IP routing table.

On the Catalyst 4000 family switches, CEF loads the FIB in to the Integrated Switching Engine hardware to increase the performance of forwarding. The Integrated Switching Engine has a finite number of forwarding slots for storing routing information. If this limit is exceeded, CEF is automatically disabled and all packets are forwarded in software. In this situation, you should reduce the number of routes on the switch and then reenable hardware switching with the **ip cef** command.

Adjacency Tables

In addition to the FIB, CEF uses adjacency tables to prepend Layer 2 addressing information. Nodes in the network are said to be *adjacent* if they are within a single hop from each other. The adjacency table maintains Layer 2 next-hop addresses for all FIB entries.

Adjacency Discovery

The adjacency table is populated as new adjacent nodes are discovered. Each time an adjacency entry is created (such as through the Address Resolution Protocol (ARP)), a link-layer header for that adjacent node is stored in the adjacency table. Once a route is determined, the link-layer header points to a next hop and corresponding adjacency entry. The link-layer header is subsequently used for encapsulation during CEF switching of packets.

Adjacency Resolution

A route might have several paths to a destination prefix, such as when a router is configured for simultaneous load balancing and redundancy. For each resolved path, a pointer is added for the adjacency corresponding to the next-hop interface for that path. This mechanism is used for load balancing across several paths.

Adjacency Types That Require Special Handling

In addition to adjacencies for next-hop interfaces (host-route adjacencies), other types of adjacencies are used to expedite switching when certain exception conditions exist. When the prefix is defined, prefixes requiring exception processing are cached with one of the special adjacencies listed in [Table 19-1](#).

Table 19-1 Adjacency Types for Exception Processing

This adjacency type...	Receives this processing...
Null adjacency	Packets destined for a Null0 interface are dropped. A Null0 interface can be used as an effective form of access filtering.
Glean adjacency	When a router is connected directly to several hosts, the FIB table on the router maintains a prefix for the subnet rather than for each individual host. The subnet prefix points to a glean adjacency. When packets need to be forwarded to a specific host, the adjacency database is gleaned for the specific prefix.
Punt adjacency	Features that require special handling or features that are not yet supported by CEF switching are sent (punted) to the next higher switching level.
Discard adjacency	Packets are discarded.
Drop adjacency	Packets are dropped.

Unresolved Adjacency

When a link-layer header is prepended to packets, FIB requires the prepend to point to an adjacency corresponding to the next hop. If an adjacency was created by FIB and was not discovered through a mechanism such as ARP, the Layer 2 addressing information is not known and the adjacency is considered incomplete. When the Layer 2 information is known, the packet is forwarded to the route processor, and the adjacency is determined through ARP.

Catalyst 4000 Implementation of CEF

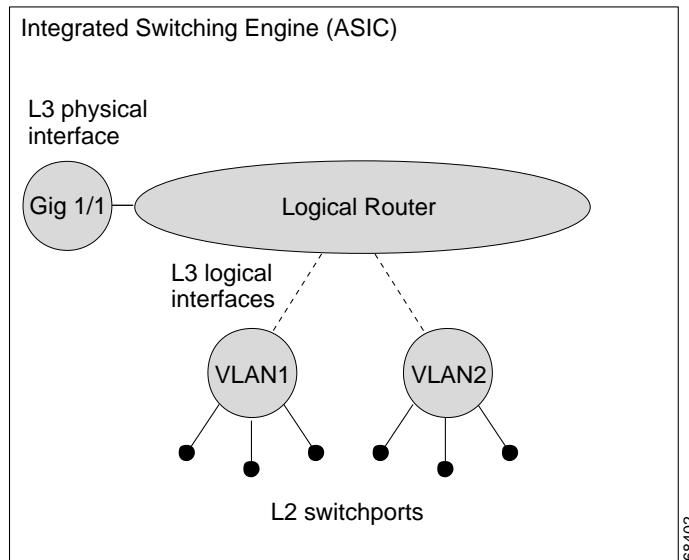
The Catalyst 4000 family switch supports an ASIC-based Integrated Switching Engine that provides:

- Ethernet bridging at Layer 2
- IP routing at Layer 3

Because the ASIC is specifically designed to forward packets, the Integrated Switching Engine hardware can run this process much faster than CPU subsystem software.

[Figure 19-1](#) shows a high-level view of the ASIC-based Layer 2 and Layer 3 switching process on the Integrated Switching Engine.

Figure 19-1 Logical L2/L3 Switch Components



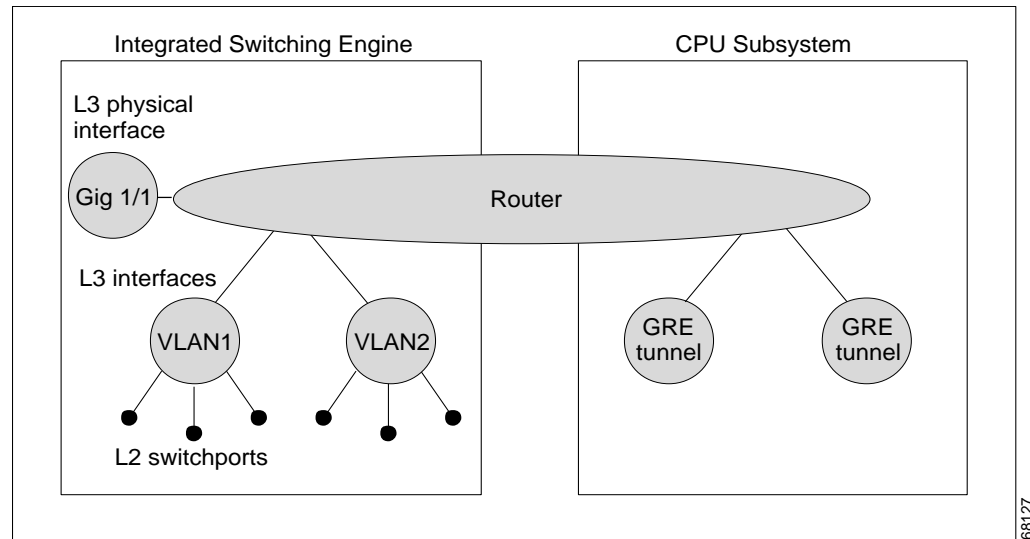
The Integrated Switching Engine performs inter-VLAN routing on logical Layer 3 interfaces with the ASIC hardware. The ASIC hardware also supports a physical Layer 3 interface that can be configured to connect with a host, a switch, or a router.

Hardware and Software Switching

For the majority of packets, the Integrated Switching Engine performs the packet forwarding function in hardware. These packets are hardware-switched at very high rates. Exception packets are forwarded by the CPU subsystem software. Statistic reports should show that the Integrated Switching Engine is forwarding the vast majority of packets in hardware. Software forwarding is significantly slower than hardware forwarding, but packets forwarded by the CPU subsystem do not reduce hardware forwarding speed.

Figure 19-2 shows a logical view of the Integrated Switching Engine and the CPU subsystem switching components.

Figure 19-2 Hardware and Software Switching Components



The Integrated Switching Engine performs inter-VLAN routing in hardware. The CPU subsystem software supports Layer 3 interfaces to VLANs that use Subnetwork Access Protocol (SNAP) encapsulation. The CPU subsystem software also supports generic routing encapsulation (GRE) tunnel.

Hardware Switching

Hardware switching is the normal operation of the Supervisor Engine III and Supervisor Engine IV.

Software Switching

Software switching occurs when traffic cannot be processed in hardware. The following types of exception packets are processed in software at a much slower rate:

- Packets that use IP header options



Note Packets that use TCP header options are switched in hardware because they do not affect the forwarding decision.

- Packets that have an expiring IP time-to-live (TTL) counter
- Packets that are forwarded to a tunnel interface
- Packets that arrive with non-supported encapsulation types
- Packets that are routed to an interface with non-supported encapsulation types
- Packets that exceed the MTU of an output interface and must be fragmented
- Packets that require an IGMP redirect to be routed
- 802.3 Ethernet packets

Load Balancing

The Catalyst 4000 family switch supports load balancing for routing packets in the Integrated Switching Engine hardware. Load balancing is always enabled. It works when multiple routes for the same network with different next-hop addresses are configured. These routes can be configured either statically or through a routing protocol such as OSPF or EIGRP.

The hardware makes a forwarding decision by using a hardware load sharing hash function to compute a value, based on the source and destination IP addresses and the source and destination TCP port numbers (if available). This load sharing hash value is then used to select which route to use to forward the packet. All hardware switching within a particular flow (such as a TCP connection) will be routed to the same next hop, thereby reducing the chance that packet reordering will occur. Up to eight different routes for a particular network are supported.

Software Interfaces

Cisco IOS for the Catalyst 4000 family switch supports GRE and IP tunnel interfaces that are not part of the hardware forwarding engine. All packets that flow to or from these interfaces must be processed in software and will have a significantly lower forwarding rate than that of hardware-switched interfaces. Also, Layer 2 features are not supported on these interfaces.

CEF Configuration Restrictions

The Integrated Switching Engine supports only ARPA and ISL/802.1q encapsulation types for Layer 3 switching in hardware. The CPU subsystem supports a number of encapsulations such as SNAP for Layer 2 switching that you can use for Layer 3 switching in software.

Configuring CEF

The following sections describe how to configure CEF:

- [Enabling CEF, page 19-7](#)
- [Configuring Load Balancing for CEF, page 19-7](#)



Note

The **ip mtu** command is not supported in this release.

Enabling CEF

By default, CEF is enabled globally on the Catalyst 4000 family switch. No configuration is required. To disable CEF, enter the following command in global configuration mode.



Note

When you disable CEF, Cisco IOS software forwards packets using the CPU subsystem software. Do not disable CEF for normal operation.

Command	Purpose
Switch(config)# no ip cef	Disables CEF operation.

To reenable CEF, enter the following command in global configuration mode:

Command	Purpose
Switch(config)# ip cef	Enables standard CEF operation.

Configuring Load Balancing for CEF

CEF load balancing is based on a combination of source and destination packet information; it allows you to optimize resources by distributing traffic over multiple paths for transferring data to a destination. You can configure load balancing on a per-destination basis. Load-balancing decisions are made on the outbound interface. You can configure per-destination load balancing for CEF on outbound interfaces.

The following topics are discussed:

- [Configuring Per-Destination Load Balancing, page 19-7](#)
- [Configuring Load Shring Hash Function, page 19-8](#)
- [Viewing CEF Information, page 19-8](#)

Configuring Per-Destination Load Balancing

Per-destination load balancing is enabled by default when you enable CEF. To use per-destination load balancing, you do not perform any additional tasks once you enable CEF.

Per-destination load balancing allows the router to use multiple paths to achieve load sharing. Packets for a given source-destination host pair are guaranteed to take the same path, even if multiple paths are available. Traffic destined for different pairs tend to take different paths. Per-destination load balancing is enabled by default when you enable CEF; it is the load balancing method of choice in most situations.

Because per-destination load balancing depends on the statistical distribution of traffic, load sharing becomes more effective as the number of source-destination pairs increases.

You can use per-destination load balancing to ensure that packets for a given host pair arrive in order. All packets for a certain host pair are routed over the same link or links.

Disabling Per-Destination Load Balancing

To disable per-destination load balancing, enter the following command in interface configuration mode:

Command	Purpose
Switch (config-if)# no ip load-sharing per-destination	Disables per-destination load balancing.

Configuring Load Shring Hash Function

When multiple unicast routes exist to a particular destination IP prefix, the hardware will send packets matching that prefix across all possible routes, thereby sharing the load across all next hop routers. By default, the route used is chosen by computing a hash of the source and destination IP addresses and using the resulting value to select the route. This preserves packet ordering for packets within a flow by ensuring that all packets within a single IP source/destination flow are sent on the same route, but it provides a near-random distribution of flows to routes.

The load-sharing hash function can be changed, so that in addition to the source and destination IP addresses, the source TCP/UDP port, the destination TCP/UDP port, or both can also be included in the hash.

To the configure load sharing hash function to use the source and/or destination ports, enter the following command in global configuration mode:

Command	Purpose
Switch (config)# [no] ip cef load-sharing algorithm include-ports source destination]	Enables load sharing hash function to use source and destination ports. Use the no keyword to set the switch to use the default IOS load-sharing algorithm.

For more information on load sharing, refer to the *Configuring Cisco Express Forwarding* module of the Cisco IOS documentation at:

http://www.cisco.com/univercd/cc/td/doc/product/software/ios121/121cgr/switch_c/xcprt2/xcdfec.htm#xtocid0



Note

The **include-ports** option does not apply to software-switched traffic on the Catalyst 4000 family switches.

Viewing CEF Information

You can view the collected CEF information. To do so, enter the following command in EXEC mode:

Command	Purpose
Switch# show ip cef	Displays the collected CEF information.

Monitoring and Maintaining CEF

To display information about IP traffic, enter the following command:

Command	Purpose
Switch# <code>show interface type slot/interface</code> <code>begin L3</code>	Displays a summary of IP unicast traffic.

This example shows how to display information about IP unicast traffic on interface Fast Ethernet 3/3:

```
Switch# show interface fastethernet 3/3 | begin L3
L3 in Switched: ucast: 0 pkt, 0 bytes - mcast: 12 pkt, 778 bytes mcast
L3 out Switched: ucast: 0 pkt, 0 bytes - mcast: 0 pkt, 0 bytes
4046399 packets input, 349370039 bytes, 0 no buffer
Received 3795255 broadcasts, 2 runts, 0 giants, 0 throttles
<...output truncated...>
Switch#
```



Note

The IP unicast packet count is updated approximately every five seconds.

Displaying IP Statistics

IP unicast statistics are gathered on a per-interface basis. To display IP statistics, enter the following command:

Command	Purpose
Switch# <code>show interface type number</code> <code>counters detail</code>	Displays IP statistics.

This example shows how to display IP unicast statistics for Part 3/1:

```
Switch# show interface fastethernet 3/1 counters detail

Port          InBytes          InUcastPkts      InMcastPkts      InBcastPkts
Fa3/1         7263539133      5998222          6412307          156

Port          OutBytes          OutUcastPkts      OutMcastPkts      OutBcastPkts
Fa3/1         7560137031      5079852          12140475          38

Port          InPkts 64         OutPkts 64         InPkts 65-127      OutPkts 65-127
Fa3/1         11274           168536           7650482           12395769

Port          InPkts 128-255      OutPkts 128-255      InPkts 256-511      OutPkts 256-511
Fa3/1         31191           55269            26923              65017

Port          InPkts 512-1023     OutPkts 512-1023
Fa3/1         133807          151582

Port          InPkts 1024-1518     OutPkts 1024-1518     InPkts 1519-1548     OutPkts 1519-1548
Fa3/1         N/A              N/A                  N/A                  N/A

Port          InPkts 1024-1522     OutPkts 1024-1522     InPkts 1523-1548     OutPkts 1523-1548
Fa3/1         4557008          4384192              0                    0
```

```

Port      Tx-Bytes-Queue-1 Tx-Bytes-Queue-2 Tx-Bytes-Queue-3 Tx-Bytes-Queue-4
Fa3/1           64                0                91007            7666686162

Port      Tx-Drops-Queue-1 Tx-Drops-Queue-2 Tx-Drops-Queue-3 Tx-Drops-Queue-4
Fa3/1           0                0                0                0

Port      Rx-No-Pkt-Buff   RxPauseFrames    TxPauseFrames    PauseFramesDrop
Fa3/1           0                0                0                N/A

Port      UnsupOpcodePause
Fa3/1           0
Switch#

```

To display CEF (software switched) and hardware IP unicast adjacency table information, enter the following command:

Command	Purpose
Switch# show adjacency [<i>interface</i>] [detail internal summary]	Displays detailed adjacency information, including Layer 2 information, when the optional detail keyword is used.

This example shows how to display adjacency statistics:

```

Switch# show adjacency gigabitethernet 3/5 detail
Protocol Interface          Address
IP        GigabitEthernet9/5     172.20.53.206(11)
          504 packets, 6110 bytes
          00605C865B82
          000164F83FA50800
          ARP                03:49:31

```



Note

Adjacency statistics are updated approximately every 10 seconds.