Firepower Threat Defense High Availability

The following topics describe how to configure Active/Standby failover to accomplish high availability of the Cisco Firepower Threat Defense.

• About Firepower Threat Defense High Availability, on page 1
• Guidelines for High Availability, on page 14
• Add a Firepower Threat Defense High Availability Pair, on page 15
• Configure Optional High Availability Parameters, on page 16
• Manage High Availability, on page 19
• Monitoring High Availability, on page 23

About Firepower Threat Defense High Availability

Configuring high availability, also called failover, requires two identical Firepower Threat Defense devices connected to each other through a dedicated failover link and, optionally, a state link. Firepower Threat Defense supports Active/Standby failover, where one unit is the active unit and passes traffic. The standby unit does not actively pass traffic, but synchronizes configuration and other state information from the active unit. When a failover occurs, the active unit fails over to the standby unit, which then becomes active.

The health of the active unit (hardware, interfaces, software, and environmental status) is monitored to determine if specific failover conditions are met. If those conditions are met, failover occurs.

Note
High availability is not supported on Firepower Threat Defense Virtual running in the public cloud.

High Availability System Requirements

This section describes the hardware, software, and license requirements for Firepower Threat Defense devices in a High Availability configuration.

Hardware Requirements

The two units in a High Availability configuration must:

• Be the same model.
• Have the same number and types of interfaces.
For the Firepower 4100/9300 chassis, all interfaces must be preconfigured in FXOS identically before you enable High Availability. If you change the interfaces after you enable High Availability, make the interface changes in FXOS on the standby unit, and then make the same changes on the active unit.

If you are using units with different flash memory sizes in your High Availability configuration, make sure the unit with the smaller flash memory has enough space to accommodate the software image files and the configuration files. If it does not, configuration synchronization from the unit with the larger flash memory to the unit with the smaller flash memory will fail.

Software Requirements

The two units in a High Availability configuration must:

- Be in the same firewall mode (routed or transparent).
- Have the same major (first number), minor (second number), and maintenance (third number) software version.
- Be in the same domain or group on the Firepower Management Center.
- Have the same NTP configuration. See Configure NTP Time Synchronization for Threat Defense.
- Be fully deployed on the Firepower Management Center with no uncommitted changes.
- Not have DHCP or PPPoE configured in any of their interfaces.

License Requirements for FTD Devices in a High Availability Pair

Firepower Threat Defense devices in a high availability configuration must have the same licenses. Before high availability is established, it does not matter which licenses are assigned to the secondary/standby device. During high availability configuration, the Firepower Management Center releases any unnecessary licenses assigned to the standby device and replaces them with identical licenses assigned to the primary/active device. For example, if the active device has a Base license and a Threat license, and the standby device has only a Base license, the Firepower Management Center communicates with the Cisco Smart Software Manager to obtain an available Threat license from your account for the standby device. If your Smart Licenses account does not include enough purchased entitlements, your account becomes Out-of-Compliance until you purchase the correct number of licenses. High availability configurations require two Smart License entitlements; one for each device in the pair.

Failover and Stateful Failover Links

The failover link and the optional stateful failover link are dedicated connections between the two units. The same interface on both devices should be used for failover and stateful failover links.

Failover Link

The two units in a failover pair constantly communicate over a failover link to determine the operating status of each unit.

Failover Link Data

The following information is communicated over the failover link:

- The unit state (active or standby)
• Hello messages (keep-alives)
• Network link status
• MAC address exchange
• Configuration replication and synchronization

**Interface for the Failover Link**

You can use any unused data interface (physical, subinterface, redundant, or EtherChannel) as the failover link; however, you cannot specify an interface that is currently configured with a name. The failover link interface is not configured as a normal networking interface; it exists for failover communication only. This interface can only be used for the failover link (and also for the state link).

The Firepower Threat Defense device does not support sharing interfaces between user data and the failover link. You also cannot use separate subinterfaces on the same parent for the failover link and for data.

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**Note**

When using an EtherChannel or Redundant Interface as the failover or stateful link, you must confirm that the same port channel with the same member interfaces exists on both devices before establishing high availability.

For a redundant interface used as the failover link, see the following benefits for added redundancy:

- When a failover unit boots up, it alternates between the member interfaces to detect an active unit.
- If a failover unit stops receiving keepalive messages from its peer on one of the member interfaces, it switches to the other member interface.

For an EtherChannel used as the failover link, to prevent out-of-order packets, only one interface in the EtherChannel is used. If that interface fails, then the next interface in the EtherChannel is used. You cannot alter the EtherChannel configuration while it is in use as a failover link.

**Connecting the Failover Link**

Connect the failover link in one of the following two ways:

- Using a switch, with no other device on the same network segment (broadcast domain or VLAN) as the failover interfaces of the Firepower Threat Defense device.
- Using an Ethernet cable to connect the units directly, without the need for an external switch.

If you do not use a switch between the units, if the interface fails, the link is brought down on both peers. This condition may hamper troubleshooting efforts because you cannot easily determine which unit has the failed interface and caused the link to come down.

**Stateful Failover Link**

To use Stateful Failover, you must configure a Stateful Failover link (also known as the state link) to pass connection state information.
Cisco recommends that the bandwidth of the stateful failover link should at least match the bandwidth of the data interfaces.

**Note**
Cisco recommends that the bandwidth of the stateful failover link should at least match the bandwidth of the data interfaces.

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**Shared with the Failover Link**

Sharing a failover link is the best way to conserve interfaces. However, you must consider a dedicated interface for the state link and failover link, if you have a large configuration and a high traffic network.

**Dedicated Interface for the Stateful Failover Link**

You can use a dedicated data interface (physical, redundant, or EtherChannel) for the state link. For an EtherChannel used as the state link, to prevent out-of-order packets, only one interface in the EtherChannel is used. If that interface fails, then the next interface in the EtherChannel is used.

Connect a dedicated state link in one of the following two ways:

- Using a switch, with no other device on the same network segment (broadcast domain or VLAN) as the failover interfaces of the Firepower Threat Defense device.

- Using an Ethernet cable to connect the appliances directly, without the need for an external switch.

  If you do not use a switch between the units, if the interface fails, the link is brought down on both peers. This condition may hamper troubleshooting efforts because you cannot easily determine which unit has the failed interface and caused the link to come down.

  The Firepower Threat Defense device supports Auto-MDI/MDIX on its copper Ethernet ports, so you can either use a crossover cable or a straight-through cable. If you use a straight-through cable, the interface automatically detects the cable and swaps one of the transmit/receive pairs to MDIX.

  For optimum performance when using long distance failover, the latency for the state link should be less than 10 milliseconds and no more than 250 milliseconds. If latency is more than 10 milliseconds, some performance degradation occurs due to retransmission of failover messages.

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**Avoiding Interrupted Failover and Data Links**

We recommend that failover links and data interfaces travel through different paths to decrease the chance that all interfaces fail at the same time. If the failover link is down, the Firepower Threat Defense device can use the data interfaces to determine if a failover is required. Subsequently, the failover operation is suspended until the health of the failover link is restored.

See the following connection scenarios to design a resilient failover network.

**Scenario 1—Not Recommended**

If a single switch or a set of switches are used to connect both failover and data interfaces between two Firepower Threat Defense devices, then when a switch or inter-switch-link is down, both Firepower Threat Defense devices become active. Therefore, the two connection methods shown in the following figures are not recommended.
**Scenario 2—Recommended**

We recommend that failover links not use the same switch as the data interfaces. Instead, use a different switch or use a direct cable to connect the failover link, as shown in the following figures.

*Figure 3: Connecting with a Different Switch*

*Figure 4: Connecting with a Cable*

**Scenario 3—Recommended**

If the Firepower Threat Defense data interfaces are connected to more than one set of switches, then a failover link can be connected to one of the switches, preferably the switch on the secure (inside) side of network, as shown in the following figure.

*Figure 5: Connecting with a Secure Switch*

**Scenario 4—Recommended**

The most reliable failover configurations use a redundant interface on the failover link, as shown in the following figures.
MAC Addresses and IP Addresses in High Availability

When you configure your interfaces, you can specify an active IP address and a standby IP address on the same network. Generally, when a failover occurs, the new active unit takes over the active IP addresses and MAC addresses. Because network devices see no change in the MAC to IP address pairing, no ARP entries change or time out anywhere on the network.

**Note**

Although recommended, the standby address is not required. Without a standby IP address, the active unit cannot perform network tests to check the standby interface health; it can only track the link state. You also cannot connect to the standby unit on that interface for management purposes.

The IP address and MAC address for the state link do not change at failover.
Active/Standby IP Addresses and MAC Addresses

For Active/Standby High Availability, see the following for IP address and MAC address usage during a failover event:

1. The active unit always uses the primary unit's IP addresses and MAC addresses.

2. When the active unit fails over, the standby unit assumes the IP addresses and MAC addresses of the failed unit and begins passing traffic.

3. When the failed unit comes back online, it is now in a standby state and takes over the standby IP addresses and MAC addresses.

However, if the secondary unit boots without detecting the primary unit, then the secondary unit becomes the active unit and uses its own MAC addresses, because it does not know the primary unit MAC addresses. When the primary unit becomes available, the secondary (active) unit changes the MAC addresses to those of the primary unit, which can cause an interruption in your network traffic. Similarly, if you swap out the primary unit with new hardware, a new MAC address is used.

Virtual MAC addresses guard against this disruption, because the active MAC addresses are known to the secondary unit at startup, and remain the same in the case of new primary unit hardware. If you do not configure virtual MAC addresses, you might need to clear the ARP tables on connected routers to restore traffic flow. The Firepower Threat Defense device does not send gratuitous ARPs for static NAT addresses when the MAC address changes, so connected routers do not learn of the MAC address change for these addresses.

Virtual MAC Addresses

The Firepower Threat Defense device has multiple methods to configure virtual MAC addresses. We recommend using only one method. If you set the MAC address using multiple methods, the MAC address used depends on many variables, and might not be predictable.

Stateful Failover

During Stateful Failover, the active unit continually passes per-connection state information to the standby unit. After a failover occurs, the same connection information is available at the new active unit. Supported end-user applications are not required to reconnect to keep the same communication session.

Supported Features

For Stateful Failover, the following state information is passed to the standby Firepower Threat Defense device:

- NAT translation table.
- TCP and UDP connections and states, including HTTP connection states. Other types of IP protocols, and ICMP, are not parsed by the active unit, because they get established on the new active unit when a new packet arrives.
- Snort connection states, inspection results, and pin hole information, including strict TCP enforcement.
- The ARP table
- The Layer 2 bridge table (for bridge groups)
- GTP PDP connection database
• SIP signaling sessions and pin holes.

• Static and dynamic routing tables—Stateful Failover participates in dynamic routing protocols, like OSPF and EIGRP, so routes that are learned through dynamic routing protocols on the active unit are maintained in a Routing Information Base (RIB) table on the standby unit. Upon a failover event, packets travel normally with minimal disruption to traffic because the active secondary unit initially has rules that mirror the primary unit. Immediately after failover, the re-convergence timer starts on the newly active unit. Then the epoch number for the RIB table increments. During re-convergence, OSPF and EIGRP routes become updated with a new epoch number. Once the timer is expired, stale route entries (determined by the epoch number) are removed from the table. The RIB then contains the newest routing protocol forwarding information on the newly active unit.

  **Note** Routes are synchronized only for link-up or link-down events on an active unit. If the link goes up or down on the standby unit, dynamic routes sent from the active unit may be lost. This is normal, expected behavior.

• DHCP Server—DHCP address leases are not replicated. However, a DHCP server configured on an interface will send a ping to make sure an address is not being used before granting the address to a DHCP client, so there is no impact to the service. State information is not relevant for DHCP relay or DDNS.

• Access control policy decisions—Decisions related to traffic matching (including URL, URL category, geolocation, and so forth), intrusion detection, malware, and file type are preserved during failover. However, for connections being evaluated at the moment of failover, there are the following caveats:
  
  • AVC—App-ID verdicts are replicated, but not detection states. Proper synchronization occurs as long as the App-ID verdicts are complete and synchronized before failover occurs.
  
  • Intrusion detection state—Upon failover, once mid-flow pickup occurs, new inspections are completed, but old states are lost.
  
  • File malware blocking—The file disposition must become available before failover.
  
  • File type detection and blocking—The file type must be identified before failover. If failover occurs while the original active device is identifying the file, the file type is not synchronized. Even if your file policy blocks that file type, the new active device downloads the file.

• User identity decisions from the identity policy, including the user-to-IP address mappings gathered passively through the User Agent and ISE Session Directory, and active authentication through captive portal. Users who are actively authenticating at the moment of failover might be prompted to authenticate again.

• Network AMP—Cloud lookups are independent from each device, so failover does not affect this feature in general. Specifically:
  
  • Signature Lookup—If failover occurs in the middle of a file transmission, no file event is generated and no detection occurs.
  
  • File Storage—If failover occurs when the file is being stored, it is stored on the original active device. If the original active device went down while the file was being stored, the file does not get stored.
• File Pre-classification (Local Analysis)—If failover occurs in the middle of pre-classification, detection fails.

• File Dynamic Analysis (Connectivity to the cloud)—If failover occurs, the system might submit the file to the cloud.

• Archive File Support—If failover occurs in the middle of an analysis, the system loses visibility into the file/archive.

• Custom Blacklisting—If failover occurs, no events are generated.

• Security Intelligence decisions. However, DNS-based decisions that are in process at the moment of failover are not completed.

Unsupported Features

For Stateful Failover, the following state information is not passed to the standby Firepower Threat Defense device:

• Sessions inside plaintext tunnels such as GRE or IP-in-IP. Sessions inside tunnels are not replicated and the new active node will not be able to reuse existing inspection verdicts to match the correct policy rules.

• Connections decrypted by the SSL Decryption policy—The decryption states are not synchronized and current decrypted connections will be blocked with reset. New connections will work correctly. Connections that are not decrypted (they match a do not decrypt rule) are not affected and are replicated correctly as any other TCP connection.

• Multicast routing.

Bridge Group Requirements for High Availability

There are special considerations for high availability when using bridge groups.

When the active unit fails over to the standby unit, the switch port running Spanning Tree Protocol (STP) can go into a blocking state for 30 to 50 seconds when it senses the topology change. To avoid traffic loss on the bridge group member interfaces while the port is in a blocking state, you can configure one of the following workarounds:

• Switch port is in Access mode—Enable the STP PortFast feature on the switch:

  interface interface_id
  spanning-tree portfast

  The PortFast feature immediately transitions the port into STP forwarding mode upon linkup. The port still participates in STP. So if the port is to be a part of the loop, the port eventually transitions into STP blocking mode.

• If the switch port is in Trunk mode, or you cannot enable STP PortFast, then you can use one of the following less desirable workarounds that impacts failover functionality or STP stability:

  • Disable interface monitoring on the bridge group and member interfaces.
• Increase the interface hold time in the failover criteria to a high value that will allow STP to converge before the unit fails over.
• Decrease the STP timers on the switch to allow STP to converge faster than the interface hold time.

Failover Health Monitoring

The Firepower Threat Defense device monitors each unit for overall health and for interface health. This section includes information about how the Firepower Threat Defense device performs tests to determine the state of each unit.

Unit Health Monitoring

The Firepower Threat Defense device determines the health of the other unit by monitoring the failover link with hello messages. When a unit does not receive three consecutive hello messages on the failover link, the unit sends LANTEST messages on each data interface, including the failover link, to validate whether or not the peer is responsive. The action that the Firepower Threat Defense device takes depends on the response from the other unit. See the following possible actions:

• If the Firepower Threat Defense device receives a response on the failover link, then it does not fail over.
• If the Firepower Threat Defense device does not receive a response on the failover link, but it does receive a response on a data interface, then the unit does not failover. The failover link is marked as failed. You should restore the failover link as soon as possible because the unit cannot fail over to the standby while the failover link is down.
• If the Firepower Threat Defense device does not receive a response on any interface, then the standby unit switches to active mode and classifies the other unit as failed.

Interface Monitoring

When a unit does not receive hello messages on a monitored interface for 2 polling periods, it runs interface tests. If all interface tests fail for an interface, but this same interface on the other unit continues to successfully pass traffic, then the interface is considered to be failed. If the threshold for failed interfaces is met, then a failover occurs. If the other unit interface also fails all the network tests, then both interfaces go into the “Unknown” state and do not count towards the failover limit.

An interface becomes operational again if it receives any traffic. A failed device returns to standby mode if the interface failure threshold is no longer met.

If an interface has IPv4 and IPv6 addresses configured on it, the device uses the IPv4 addresses to perform the health monitoring.

If an interface has only IPv6 addresses configured on it, then the device uses IPv6 neighbor discovery instead of ARP to perform the health monitoring tests. For the broadcast ping test, the device uses the IPv6 all nodes address (FE02::1).

Interface Tests

The Firepower Threat Defense device uses the following interface tests:

1. Link Up/Down test—A test of the interface status. If the Link Up/Down test indicates that the interface is down, then the device considers it failed. If the status is Up, then the device performs the Network Activity test.
2. Network Activity test—A received network activity test. The purpose of this test is to generate network traffic using LANTEST messages to determine which (if either) unit has failed. At the start of the test, each unit clears its received packet count for its interfaces. As soon as a unit receives any packets during the test (up to 5 seconds), then the interface is considered operational. If one unit receives traffic and the other unit does not, then the unit that received no traffic is considered failed. If neither unit received traffic, then the device starts the ARP test.

3. ARP test—A reading of the unit ARP cache for the 2 most recently acquired entries. One at a time, the unit sends ARP requests to these machines, attempting to stimulate network traffic. After each request, the unit counts all received traffic for up to 5 seconds. If traffic is received, the interface is considered operational. If no traffic is received, an ARP request is sent to the next machine. If at the end of the list no traffic has been received, the device starts the ping test.

4. Broadcast Ping test—A ping test that consists of sending out a broadcast ping request. The unit then counts all received packets for up to 5 seconds. If any packets are received at any time during this interval, the interface is considered operational and testing stops. If no traffic is received, the testing starts over again with the ARP test.

**Interface Status**

Monitored interfaces can have the following status:

- **Unknown**—Initial status. This status can also mean the status cannot be determined.
- **Normal**—The interface is receiving traffic.
- **Normal (Waiting)**—The interface is up, but has not yet received a hello packet from the corresponding interface on the peer unit.
- **Normal (Not-Monitored)**—The interface is up, but is not monitored by the failover process.
- **Testing**—Hello messages are not heard on the interface for five poll times.
- **Link Down**—The interface or VLAN is administratively down.
- **Link Down (Waiting)**—The interface or VLAN is administratively down and has not yet received a hello packet from the corresponding interface on the peer unit.
- **Link Down (Not-Monitored)**—The interface or VLAN is administratively down, but is not monitored by the failover process.
- **No Link**—The physical link for the interface is down.
- **No Link (Waiting)**—The physical link for the interface is down and has not yet received a hello packet from the corresponding interface on the peer unit.
- **No Link (Not-Monitored)**—The physical link for the interface is down, but is not monitored by the failover process.
- **Failed**—No traffic is received on the interface, yet traffic is heard on the peer interface.

**Failover Triggers and Detection Timing**

The following table shows the failover triggering events and associated failure detection timing. If failover occurs, you can view the reason for the failover in the Message Center, along with various operations pertaining to the high availability pair.
### About Active/Standby Failover

Active/Standby failover lets you use a standby Firepower Threat Defense device to take over the functionality of a failed unit. When the active unit fails, the standby unit becomes the active unit.

### Primary/Secondary Roles and Active/Standby Status

When setting up Active/Standby failover, you configure one unit to be primary and the other to be secondary. During configuration, the primary unit’s policies are synchronized to the secondary unit. At this point, the two units act as a single device for device and policy configuration. However, for events, dashboards, reports and health monitoring, they continue to display as separate devices.

The main differences between the two units in a failover pair are related to which unit is active and which unit is standby, namely which IP addresses to use and which unit actively passes traffic.

However, a few differences exist between the units based on which unit is primary (as specified in the configuration) and which unit is secondary:

- The primary unit always becomes the active unit if both units start up at the same time (and are of equal operational health).
- The primary unit MAC addresses are always coupled with the active IP addresses. The exception to this rule occurs when the secondary unit becomes active and cannot obtain the primary unit MAC addresses over the failover link. In this case, the secondary unit MAC addresses are used.

### Active Unit Determination at Startup

The active unit is determined by the following:

- If a unit boots and detects a peer already running as active, it becomes the standby unit.
- If a unit boots and does not detect a peer, it becomes the active unit.
- If both units boot simultaneously, then the primary unit becomes the active unit, and the secondary unit becomes the standby unit.

### Failover Events

In Active/Standby failover, failover occurs on a unit basis.
The following table shows the failover action for each failure event. For each failure event, the table shows the failover policy (failover or no failover), the action taken by the active unit, the action taken by the standby unit, and any special notes about the failover condition and actions.

**Table 2: Failover Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Failure Event</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Active Group Action</th>
<th>Standby Group Action</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active unit failed (power or hardware)</td>
<td>Failover</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Become active</td>
<td>Mark active as failed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No hello messages are received on any monitored interface or the failover link.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formerly active unit recovers</td>
<td>No failover</td>
<td>Become standby</td>
<td>No action</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standby unit failed (power or hardware)</td>
<td>No failover</td>
<td>Mark standby as failed</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>When the standby unit is marked as failed, then the active unit does not attempt to fail over, even if the interface failure threshold is surpassed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failover link failed during operation</td>
<td>No failover</td>
<td>Mark failover link as failed</td>
<td>Mark failover link as failed</td>
<td>You should restore the failover link as soon as possible because the unit cannot fail over to the standby unit while the failover link is down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failover link failed at startup</td>
<td>No failover</td>
<td>Mark failover link as failed</td>
<td>Become active</td>
<td>If the failover link is down at startup, both units become active.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State link failed</td>
<td>No failover</td>
<td>No action</td>
<td>No action</td>
<td>State information becomes out of date, and sessions are terminated if a failover occurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface failure on active unit above threshold</td>
<td>Failover</td>
<td>Mark active as failed</td>
<td>Become active</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface failure on standby unit above threshold</td>
<td>No failover</td>
<td>No action</td>
<td>Mark standby as failed</td>
<td>When the standby unit is marked as failed, then the active unit does not attempt to fail over even if the interface failure threshold is surpassed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guidelines for High Availability

Model Support

- ASA 5506W-X—You must disable interface monitoring for the internal GigabitEthernet 1/9 interface. These interfaces will not be able to communicate to perform the default interface monitoring checks, resulting in a switch from active to standby and back again because of expected interface communication failures.

- Firepower Threat Defense on the Firepower 9300—Intra-chassis High Availability is not supported.

- The Firepower Threat Defense Virtual on public cloud networks such as Microsoft Azure and Amazon Web Services are not supported with High Availability because Layer 2 connectivity is required.

Additional Guidelines

- When the active unit fails over to the standby unit, the connected switch port running Spanning Tree Protocol (STP) can go into a blocking state for 30 to 50 seconds when it senses the topology change. To avoid traffic loss while the port is in a blocking state, you can enable the STP PortFast feature on the switch:

  ```
  interface interface_id spanning-tree portfast
  ```

  This workaround applies to switches connected to both routed mode and bridge group interfaces. The PortFast feature immediately transitions the port into STP forwarding mode upon linkup. The port still participates in STP. So if the port is to be a part of the loop, the port eventually transitions into STP blocking mode.

- You cannot enable failover if a local CA server is configured. Remove the CA configuration using the `no crypto ca server` command.

- Configuring port security on the switch(es) connected to the Firepower Threat Defense failover pair can cause communication problems when a failover event occurs. This problem occurs when a secure MAC address configured or learned on one secure port moves to another secure port, a violation is flagged by the switch port security feature.

- For Active/Standby High Availability and a VPN IPsec tunnel, you cannot monitor both the active and standby units using SNMP over the VPN tunnel. The standby unit does not have an active VPN tunnel, and will drop traffic destined for the NMS. You can instead use SNMPv3 with encryption so the IPsec tunnel is not required.

- Make sure each unit in the High Availability pair uses a unique hostname; the Firepower Management Center cannot add the secondary unit if it has the same name as the primary unit.
Add a Firepower Threat Defense High Availability Pair

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smart License</th>
<th>Classic License</th>
<th>Supported Devices</th>
<th>Supported Domains</th>
<th>Access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Firepower Threat</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>Admin/Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Defense</td>
<td></td>
<td>Admin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Firepower Threat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Defense Virtual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When establishing an Active/Standy High Availability pair, you designate one of the devices as primary and the other as secondary. The system applies a merged configuration to the paired devices. If there is a conflict, the system applies the configuration from the device you designated as primary.

In a multidomain deployment, devices in a high availability pair must belong to the same domain.

**Note**
The system uses the failover link to sync configuration, while the stateful failover link is used to sync application content between peers. The failover link and the stateful failover link are in a private IP space and are only used for communication between peers in a high availability pair. After high availability is established, selected interface links and encryption settings cannot be modified without breaking the high availability pair and reconfiguring it.

**Caution**
Creating or breaking a Firepower Threat Defense high availability pair immediately restarts the Snort process on the primary and secondary devices, temporarily interrupting traffic inspection on both devices. Whether traffic drops during this interruption or passes without further inspection depends on how the target device handles traffic. See Snort® Restart Traffic Behavior for more information. The system warns you that continuing to create a high availability pair restarts the Snort process on the primary and secondary devices and allows you to cancel.

**Before you begin**
Confirm that both devices:

- Are the same model.
- Have the same number and type of interfaces.
- Are in the same domain and group.
- Have normal health status and are running the same software.
- Are either in routed or transparent mode.
- Have the same NTP configuration. See Configure NTP Time Synchronization for Threat Defense.
- Are fully deployed with no uncommitted changes.
- Do not have DHCP or PPPoE configured in any of their interfaces.
Procedure

Step 1  Add both devices to the Firepower Management Center according to [Add Devices to the Firepower Management Center](#).

Step 2  Choose Devices > Device Management.

Step 3  From the Add drop-down menu, choose Add High Availability.

Step 4  Enter a display Name for the high availability pair.

Step 5  Under Device Type, choose Firepower Threat Defense.

Step 6  Choose the Primary Peer device for the high availability pair.

Step 7  Choose the Secondary Peer device for the high availability pair.

Step 8  Click Continue.

Step 9  Under LAN Failover Link, choose an Interface with enough bandwidth to reserve for failover communications.

**Note** Only interfaces that do not have a logical name and do not belong to a security zone will be listed in the Interface drop-down in the Add High Availability Pair dialog.

Step 10  Type any identifying Logical Name.

Step 11  Type a Primary IP address for the failover link on the active unit. This address should be on an unused subnet.

**Note** 169.254.0.0/16 and fd00:0:0:*::/64 are internally used subnets and cannot be used for the failover or state links.

Step 12  Optionally, choose Use IPv6 Address.

Step 13  Type a Secondary IP address for the failover link on the standby unit. This IP address must be in the same subnet as the primary IP address.

Step 14  If IPv4 addresses are used, type a Subnet Mask that applies to both the primary and secondary IP addresses.

Step 15  Optionally, under Stateful Failover Link, choose the same Interface, or choose a different interface and enter the high availability configuration information.

**Note** 169.254.0.0/16 and fd00:0:0:*::/64 are internally used subnets and cannot be used for the failover or state links.

Step 16  Optionally, choose Enabled and choose the Key Generation method for IPsec Encryption between the failover links.

Step 17  Click OK. This process takes a few minutes as the process synchronizes system data.

Configure Optional High Availability Parameters

You can view the initial High Availability Configuration on the Firepower Management Center. You cannot edit these settings without breaking the high availability pair and then re-establishing it.

You can edit the Failover Trigger Criteria to improve failover results. Interface Monitoring allows you to determine which interfaces are better suited for failover.
Configure Standby IP Addresses and Interface Monitoring

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For each interface, set a standby IP address. Although recommended, the standby address is not required. Without a standby IP address, the active unit cannot perform network tests to check the standby interface health; it can only track the link state.

By default, monitoring is enabled on all physical interfaces with logical names configured. You might want to exclude interfaces attached to less critical networks from affecting your failover policy.

**Procedure**

**Step 1** Choose Devices > Device Management.

**Step 2** Next to the device high-availability pair you want to edit, click the edit icon (✏).

In a multidomain deployment, if you are not in a leaf domain, the system prompts you to switch.

**Step 3** Click the High Availability tab.

**Step 4** In the Monitored Interfaces area, click the edit icon (✏) next to the interface you want to edit.

**Step 5** Check the Monitor this interface for failures check box.

**Step 6** On the IPv4 tab, enter the Standby IP Address.

This address must be a free address on the same network as the active IP address.

**Step 7** If you configured the IPv6 address manually, on the IPv6 tab, click the edit icon (✏) next to the active IP address, enter the Standby IP Address, and click OK.

This address must be a free address on the same network as the active IP address. For autogenerated and Enforce EUI 64 addresses, the standby address is automatically generated.

**Step 8** Click OK.

**Edit High Availability Failover Criteria**

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You can customize failover criteria based on your network deployment.
Procedure

Step 1  Choose **Devices > Device Management**.

Step 2  Next to the device high-availability pair you want to edit, click the edit icon (✏).
In a multidomain deployment, if you are not in a leaf domain, the system prompts you to switch.

Step 3  Choose **High Availability**.

Step 4  Next to Failover Trigger Criteria, click the edit icon (✏).

Step 5  Under Interface Failure Threshold, choose the number or percentage of interfaces that must fail before the device fails over.

Step 6  Under Hello packet Intervals, choose how often hello packets are sent over the failover link.

Step 7  Click **OK**.

Configure Virtual MAC addresses

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You can configure active and standby MAC addresses for failover in two places on the Firepower Management Center:

- The Advanced tab of the Edit Interface page during interface configuration; see **Configure the MAC Address**.
- The Add Interface MAC Address page accessed from the High Availability page; see

If active and standby MAC addresses are configured in both locations, the addresses defined during interface configuration take preference for failover.

You can minimize loss of traffic during failover by designating active and standby mac addresses to the physical interface. This feature offers redundancy against IP address mapping for failover.

Procedure

Step 1  Choose **Devices > Device Management**.

Step 2  Next to the device high-availability pair you want to edit, click the edit icon (✏).
In a multidomain deployment, if you are not in a leaf domain, the system prompts you to switch.

Step 3  Choose **High Availability**.

Step 4  Choose the add icon (➕) next to Interface Mac Addresses.
Step 5  Choose a Physical Interface.
Step 6  Type an Active Interface Mac Address.
Step 7  Type a Standby Interface Mac Address.
Step 8  Click OK.

Manage High Availability

This section describes how to manage High Availability units after you enable High Availability, including how to change the High Availability setup and how to force failover from one unit to another.

Switch the Active Peer in a Firepower Threat Defense High Availability Pair

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After you establish a Firepower Threat Defense high availability pair, you can manually switch the active and standby units, effectively forcing failover for reasons such as persistent fault or health events on the current active unit. Both units should be fully deployed before you complete this procedure.

Procedure

Step 1  Choose Devices > Device Management.
Step 2  Next to the high availability pair where you want to change the active peer, click the Switch Active Peer icon ( ).
Step 3  You can:
  • Click Yes to immediately make the standby device the active device in the high availability pair.
  • Click No to cancel and return to the Device Management page.

Suspend and Resume High Availability

You can suspend a unit in a high availability pair. This is useful when:
  • Both units are in an active-active situation and fixing the communication on the failover link does not correct the problem.
  • You want to troubleshoot an active or standby unit and do not want the units to fail over during that time.
When you suspend high availability, you stop the pair of devices from behaving as a failover unit. The currently active device remains active, handling all user connections. However, failover criteria are no longer monitored, and the system will never fail over to the now pseudo-standby device. The standby device will retain its configuration, but it will remain inactive.

The key difference between suspending HA and breaking HA is that on a suspended HA device, the high availability configuration is retained. When you break HA, the configuration is erased. Thus, you have the option to resume HA on a suspended system, which enables the existing configuration and makes the two devices function as a failover pair again.

To suspend HA, use the `configure failover suspend` command.

If you suspend high availability from the active unit, the configuration is suspended on both the active and standby unit. If you suspend it from the standby unit, it is suspended on the standby unit only, but the active unit will not attempt to fail over to a suspended unit.

To resume failover, use the `configure failover resume` command.

You can resume a unit only if it is in Suspended state. The unit will negotiate active/standby status with the peer unit.

**Note**

Suspending high availability is a temporary state. If you reload a unit, it resumes the high-availability configuration automatically and negotiates the active/standby state with the peer.

---

**Replace a Unit**

If you need to replace a failed unit in a Firepower Threat Defense high availability pair, you must choose the Force Break option to separate the pair. After you replace or repair the unit, you must then register the device on the Firepower Management Center and re-establish high availability. The process varies depending on whether the device is primary or secondary.

### Replace a Primary Unit

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Follow the steps below to replace a failed primary unit in a Firepower Threat Defense high availability pair. Failing to follow these steps can overwrite the existing high availability configuration.

**Procedure**

**Step 1** Choose **Force Break** to separate the high availability pair; see Separate Units in a High Availability Pair, on page 21.

**Step 2** Unregister the failed primary Firepower Threat Defense device from the Firepower Management Center; see Deleting Devices from the Firepower Management Center.
Step 3  Register the replacement Firepower Threat Defense to the Firepower Management Center; see Add Devices to the Firepower Management Center.

Step 4  Configure high availability, using the existing secondary/active unit as the primary device and the replacement device as the secondary/standby device during registration; see Add a Firepower Threat Defense High Availability Pair, on page 15.

---

### Replace a Secondary Unit

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Follow the steps below to replace a failed secondary unit in a Firepower Threat Defense high availability pair.

**Procedure**

**Step 1**  Choose **Force Break** to separate the high availability pair; see Separate Units in a High Availability Pair, on page 21.

**Step 2**  Unregister the secondary Firepower Threat Defense device from the Firepower Management Center; see Deleting Devices from the Firepower Management Center.

**Step 3**  Register the replacement Firepower Threat Defense to the Firepower Management Center; see Add Devices to the Firepower Management Center.

**Step 4**  Configure high availability, using the existing primary/active unit as the primary device and the replacement device as the secondary/standby device during registration; see Add a Firepower Threat Defense High Availability Pair, on page 15.

### Separate Units in a High Availability Pair

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When you break a high availability pair, the active device retains full deployed functionality. The standby device loses its failover and interface configurations, and becomes a standalone device. When you a break a high availability pair, policies that were yet to be deployed to the active device, prior to the break operation are automatically deployed to the active device when the break operation is completed.
An exception to this is the flex-config policy. A flex-config policy deployed on the active device may show a deployment failure after the break HA operation. You must alter and re-deploy the flex-config policy on the active device.

**Tip**
If you cannot reach the high availability pair using the Firepower Management Center, use the CLI command `configure high-availability disable` to remove the failover configuration from both devices.

**Procedure**

**Step 1**
Choose Devices > Device Management.

**Step 2**
Next to the high-availability pair you want to break, click the Break HA icon (🎉).

**Step 3**
Optionally, check the check box to force break, if the standby peer does not respond.

**Step 4**
Click Yes. The device high-availability pair is separated.

The Break operation removes the failover configuration from the active and standby devices.

**What to do next**
(Optional) If you are using a flex-config policy on the active device, alter and re-deploy the flex-config policy to eliminate deployment errors.

### Unregister a High Availability Pair

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You can delete the pair from the Firepower Management Center and disable High Availability on each unit using the CLI.

**Before you begin**
This procedure requires CLI access.

**Procedure**

**Step 1**
Choose Devices > Device Management.
Step 2  Next to the high-availability pair you want to unregister, click the Delete icon ( ).
Step 3  Click Yes. The device high availability pair is deleted.
Step 4  On each unit, access the Firepower Threat Defense CLI, and enter the following command:

```bash
configure high-availability disable
```

If you do not enter this command, you cannot re-register the units and form a new HA pair.

**Note**  Enter this command before you change the firewall mode; if you change the mode, the unit will not later let you enter the `configure high-availability disable` command, and the Firepower Management Center cannot re-form the HA pair without this command.

## Monitoring High Availability

This section lets you monitor the High Availability status.

### View Failover History

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You can view the failover history of both high availability devices in a single view. The history displays in chronological order and includes the reason for any failover.

**Procedure**

**Step 1**  Choose Devices > Device Management.
**Step 2**  Next to the device high-availability pair you want to edit, click the edit icon ( ).
In a multidomain deployment, if you are not in a leaf domain, the system prompts you to switch.
**Step 3**  Choose Summary.
**Step 4**  Under General, click the view icon ( ).
View Stateful Failover Statistics

You can view the stateful failover link statistics of both the primary and secondary devices in the high availability pair.

**Procedure**

**Step 1** Choose *Devices > Device Management*.

**Step 2** Next to the device high-availability pair you want to edit, click the edit icon (✏).

In a multidomain deployment, if you are not in a leaf domain, the system prompts you to switch.

**Step 3** Choose *High Availability*.

**Step 4** Under Stateful Failover Link, click the view icon (🔍).

**Step 5** Choose a device to view statistics.