

What is the lmhosts file and why do I need it?

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Introduction

What is the `lmhosts` file and what does it do?

The `lmhosts` file is a text file that maps Internet Protocol (IP) addresses to NetBIOS names of remote servers with which you wish to communicate over the TCP/IP protocol. The `lmhosts` file is located in the `%SystemRoot%\System32\drivers\etc` folder. By default `%SystemRoot%` is `"C:\Windows"`. Here you will find a sample `lmhosts` file, `lmhosts.sam`, and a sample hosts file, `hosts.sam`. If any mappings have been created you will find the `lmhosts` file and possibly a `hosts` file, neither having an extension. The `hosts` file contains IP address to Domain Name mappings for TCP/IP. Domain Names and NetBIOS names should be the same, but because they can be configured in two different locations, conflicts can arise. Therefore, IP mappings should be stored in the `lmhosts` file because this is the file that Windows checks first when resolving any name, be it NetBIOS or Domain.

How does this information apply to the Intelli-Site software?

Intelli-Site references all computers by name, not address. Therefore, it is mandatory that a method to resolve those names to IP address exists. Commonly, installations do not have DNS servers. A properly configured `lmhosts` file solves this issue. In addition, a properly configured `lmhosts` file provides a significant performance enhancement. Having the names of the Server and Workstations in the file speeds up the resolution process because this file is checked before it queries the DNS server. Also, even when a network has a DNS server, it is not uncommon for it to be improperly configured or missing or unreachable. A missing or improperly configured DNS server will prevent the Workstation and Server from communicating.

Resolution

How do I properly configure my `lmhosts` file?

Every Windows computer in the Intelli-Site system must have a properly configured `lmhosts` file. Luckily, configuring the `lmhosts` file is rather straight forward.

- Browse to the `%SystemRoot%\System32\drivers\etc` folder
- If there is not an `lmhosts` file, copy `lmhosts.sam` to `lmhosts`
- Open the `lmhosts` file with "Notepad" either by double-clicking and choosing Notepad from the list, or by right-clicking and select "Open with..." then selecting Notepad.
- Add a mapping for each computer in the Intelli-Site system in the following way:
`<IP Address> <Name> #PRE`
For example:
`"192.168.1.50 ISServer #PRE"`
- Save the file. Windows7 or Windows Server 2008 R2 may require you to save the file in an

alternate location (i.e., the Desktop) and then copy the file. This is because of the UAC protections.

- Reboot the computer.
- Repeat these steps on each computer in the Intelli-Site system.



Note

As the `lmhosts` file header states, the whole file is parsed including comments on each lookup. So it is important to keep comments to a minimum and it is advisable to insert the mappings at the top of the file if there are a lot of names or a lot of activity.

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