Renesas RA Family

Secure Crypto Engine Operational Modes

Introduction

The Secure Crypto Engine 9 (SCE9) on Renesas RA Family MCUs can operate in two different modes, called Compatibility Mode and Protected Mode. This Application Note describes the two modes, highlights the advantages and disadvantages of each, and provides guidance for using the two modes. In addition, reference links are provided to existing Renesas RA Family Application Projects demonstrating these two modes, so the user can refer to them for details on the corresponding FSP module usage.

Prerequisites and Intended Audience

This application note assumes you have some knowledge about cryptography. The reader is recommended to read the Secure Crypto Engine chapter of the Hardware User's Manual to understand the basics of the hardware features of the SCE.

The intended audience are product developers, product manufacturers, product support, or end users who are involved with designing application systems involving usage of the Renesas RA Family MCU Secure Crypto Engine.

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1. Overview of RA Family MCU Secure Crypto Engine

The Renesas RA Family RA4 and RA6 MCU Series include a Secure Crypto Engine (SCE), which consists of an access management circuit, encryption engine, and random number generator. There are three type of Secure Crypto Engines (SCE) that reside on the different MCU Groups.

- **SCE9**: RA4M2, RA4M3, RA6M4, RA6M5
- **SCE7:** RA6M1, RA6M2, RA6M3, RA6T1
- **SCE5:** RA4M1, RA4W1
- **SCE5_B:** RA6T2

This section introduces the general structure and cryptographic capabilities of the Secure Crypto Engines.

1.1 General Structure of the Secure Crypto Engine

The Secure Crypto Engines are isolated subsystems on the MCU. The internal cryptographic operations are isolated from a CPU-accessible bus. Renesas's unique secure key handling capabilities enable the creation of solutions that have no plaintext key exposure outside the crypto engine.

Figure 1 is the SCE9 structural feature representation. Different versions of the SCE offer different security feature sets, but the structural features are common. See section 1.2 for details on the differences.

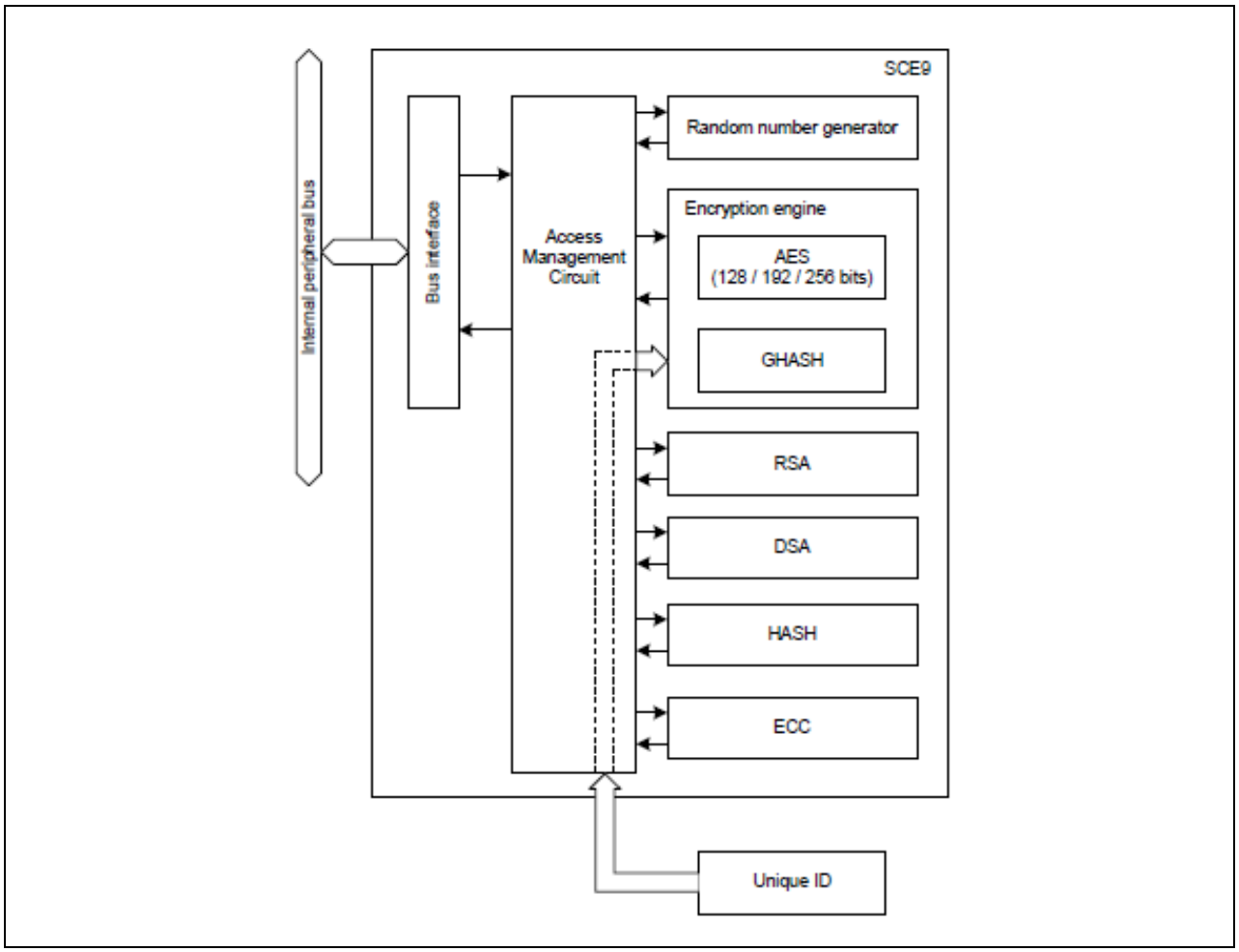

Figure 1. SCE9 Structural Features

1.2 Cryptographic Capabilities of the Secure Crypto Engine

The following table provides a summary of the cryptographic capabilities of the Secure Crypto Engines found in the RA Family MCUs, as supported by the Flexible Software Package (FSP).

Table 1. SCE Cryptographic Capabilities

Functions		SCE9	SCE7	SCE5, SCE5_B
RSA	Key Generation, Sign/Verify	Up to 4K (RSA 3K/4K - Verify only)	Up to 2K	-
ECC	Key Generation, ECDSA, ECDH	Up to 512 bit	Up to 384 bit	-
AES	ECB, CBC, CTR	128/192/256	128/192/256	128/256
	GCTR	128/192/256	128/192/256	-
	XTS	128/256	128/256	-
	CCM, GCM, CMAC	128/192/256	128/192/256	128/256
Hash	GHASH	Y	Y	Y
	HMAC	SHA224/256	SHA224/256	-
	SHA2 (224/256)	Y	Y	-
TRNG	HW Entropy, DRBG-AES-128	Y	Y	Y
Wrapped	Key confidentiality, authenticity	Y	Y	Y
Plaintext	Legacy compatibility	Y	Y	Y
Modes	Operational Modes	Compatibility Mode, Protected Mode	Compatibility Mode	Compatibility Mode

Following are some highlights of the features of each of the SCE modules:

- SCE5 and SCE5_B provide hardware-accelerated symmetric encryption for confidentiality.
- SCE7 adds hardware-accelerated asymmetric encryption and advanced hash functions for integrity and authentication. SCE7 AES, SHA, and random number generation DRBG are NIST CAVP certified.
- SCE9 extends asymmetric encryption support for RSA up to 4K and enhanced key storage capability with a Hardware Unique Key (HUK). The full complement of algorithms is NIST CAVP certified.

1.3 Key Handling Capabilities of the Secure Crypto Engine

1.3.1 Support for Wrapped Keys

Renesas RA Family MCUs have the unique ability to store and use cryptographic keys in wrapped format. Wrapping involves encrypting and signing the key with either the MCU's Hardware Unique Key (HUK) or a derived key based on the MCU's Hardware Root Key and MCU's Unique ID. Since these encryption keys are unique for each individual MCU, even if an attacker were able to extract the wrapped key, another MCU will not be able to use it.

In Compatibility Mode, plaintext keys can be wrapped by application software. Wrapped keys can also be generated by the Secure Crypto Engine. The application software can then use the wrapped keys via the PSA Crypto APIs. Support for secure key injection for Compatibility Mode is being added in FSP v4.x.x.

In Protected Mode, only wrapped keys can be used by application software. Wrapped keys can be generated by the Secure Crypto Engine and known keys can be securely injected via a device programmer. Application software can update the application with new keys by using a previously injected Key-Update Key, which must be injected via a device programmer. Refer to the *Renesas RA Family Installing and Updating Secure Keys* Application Project for more information about this process.

1.3.2 Support for Plaintext Keys

Plaintext keys are often required to provide legacy system support or to integrate with various software stacks and libraries. SCE Compatibility Mode supports plaintext key usage.

SCE Protected Mode does not support plaintext keys. Having plaintext keys present in the application is inherently a security risk, because it is possible that malicious code could exploit system weaknesses and obtain the plaintext key data. This risk may be determined to be low enough to be acceptable, but the risk does exist. Protected Mode protects against this risk by not supporting plaintext key usage.

2. Compatibility Mode of the Secure Crypto Engine

Compatibility Mode provides straight-forward integration with legacy systems and third-party software and solutions, while offering optimised performance and unlimited secure key storage.

2.1 Advantages of Compatibility Mode

Following are some advantages when using Compatibility Mode.

- Plaintext keys are allowed. This provides compatibility with legacy systems and simplifies software development. It can also be necessary to integrate with existing software and infrastructure. Many existing programming systems support plaintext key installation, often using application code to securely store the key on chip.
- Wrapped keys for secure key storage are supported but not required. Generation of wrapped keys is also supported. Support for secure key injection for Compatibility Mode is being added in FSP v4.x.x.

2.2 Disadvantages of Compatibility Mode

Following are some disadvantages when using Compatibility mode.

- No Simple Power Analysis (SPA) and Differential Power Analysis (DPA) protections.
- Potential user key exposure if plaintext keys are used. The user must evaluate the potential threats and risk of this exposure and implement their design accordingly.
- Secure key injection is more complicated than for Protected Mode, as it involves application-level code.
- Secure key update is limited, as there will be plaintext exposure outside SCE. For more information about this process, refer to the Renesas RA Family MCU *Installing and Utilizing Cryptographic User Keys using SCE9* Application Project.

2.3 Compatibility Mode Support with Renesas RA Family FSP

The SCE Compatibility Mode is supported by all Renesas RA Family RA6 and RA4 MCUs which have a Secure Crypto Engine. This mode can be accessed using FSP MbedCrypto module, the PSA Crypto APIs, or the Network connection stacks in FSP v2.0.0 or later. There are several application projects that demonstrate the SCE operating in Compatibility mode. Refer to the Reference section items 3 to 5.

3. The Protected Mode of the Secure Crypto Engine

Protected Mode provides optimum protection against security attacks by providing SPA/DPA resistance and secure key injection and update, with a usage model that enforces secure best practices key handling.

3.1 Advantages of Protected Mode

Protected Mode has many security advantages listed as follows:

- No plaintext key exposure on any CPU- or externally accessible bus.
- Secure key injection using the serial programming interface simplifies secure key provisioning.
- Secure key update via user-installed Key-Update Key enables secure key update in the field.
- SPA/DPA side-channel attack resistance is included. Side-channel attack using power analysis is one of the most frequent attacks used to extract sensitive information from a chip. Renesas RA Family SCE Protected Mode implements countermeasures against such attacks.
- Countermeasures for timing attacks are implemented. The ECC and RSA implementation on SCE9 are constant time when dealing with sensitive key material.
- The implemented API is designed to be compatible with the RX Family TSIP Library, facilitating the porting of software between Renesas MCU families.

3.2 Disadvantages of Protected Mode

Following are the potential disadvantages of using Protected Mode:

- Plaintext keys are not allowed, which can introduce difficulties integrating with legacy systems and software.
- For cryptographic protocols that needs key calculation, for example ECDH and ECIES, key calculation must be done within the SCE. Depending on the specific protocol, this functionality may or may not be supported by the FSP.

3.3 Protected Mode Support with Renesas RA Family FSP and Renesas Flash Programmer

The SCE Protected Mode can be accessed using the FSP Crypto module (`r_sce_protected`) in a standalone format with FSP v3.0.0 or later versions. Support for other libraries (for example, TLS) will be integrated in later FSP releases.

Protected Mode supports wrapped user key generation via FSP Crypto API calls and key injection via the serial programming interface using RFP.

Field update of user keys can be achieved by injecting one or more Key-Update Keys via the serial programming interface. New keys are then injected using one of the previously injected Key-Update Keys and the FSP Crypto APIs.

To get hands-on experience using the SCE Protected Mode with FSP Crypto APIs, user can reference *Renesas RA Family MCU Installing and Updating Secure Keys* Application Project. This Application Project includes an Application Note that provides step-by-step instructions on how to perform application key and Key-Update Key injection. In addition, a reference example software project is provided in this Application Project that implements key update via the previously injected Key-Update Key and FSP Crypto APIs. See the Reference section for information on this Application Project.

4. Secure Crypto Engine Operational Modes Summary

The PSA Crypto API implementation uses SCE Compatibility Mode. The FSP Crypto API implementation uses SCE Protected Mode. The following table provides a side-by-side comparison of the two modes regarding the key formats, key injection in terms of FSP support and inoperability between the two different operation modes. **Note that keys injected via a device programmer (that is, the factory bootloader) cannot be used in Compatibility Mode with the SCE9. SCE5_B key injection via the factory bootloader is performed in Compatibility mode.**

Detailed Keys Capabilities	Compatibility Mode PSA Crypto API	Protected Mode FSP Crypto API
Plaintext Symmetric and Private Keys		
Injection via factory bootloader	No	No
Injection via FSP	Yes	
Creation via key generation	No	
Usage within FSP	Yes	
Standard Format Public Keys		
Injection via factory bootloader	No	No
Injection via FSP	Yes	
Creation via key generation	Yes	
Usage within FSP	Yes	
MCU-wrapped Symmetric and Private Keys		
Secure injection via factory bootloader	No	Yes
Secure injection via FSP	Yes	No
Secure update via FSP	Yes*	Yes
Creation via key generation	Yes	Yes
Usage within FSP	Yes	Yes
Cross-mode compatibility	**No**	**No**
MAC-tagged Public Keys		
Secure injection via factory bootloader	No	Yes
Secure injection via FSP		No
Secure update via FSP		Yes
Creation via key generation		Yes
Usage within FSP		Yes
Cross-mode compatibility	**No**	**No**

Ensures optimal key storage protection

Enables legacy system and software support

Simplifies secure provisioning

Removes Renesas DLM server dependency. Protects against malicious key injection.

Provides authenticity and integrity check of public key.

5. Mode Selection based on Application Use Cases

This section introduces some of the common cryptographic application use cases. Information on the SCE operational modes support status for these uses cases are provided for user's reference.

5.1 Trusted Firmware M (TF-M)

Trusted Firmware-M (TF-M) implements the Secure Processing Environment (SPE) for Armv8-M, Armv8.1-M architectures (for example, the Arm® Cortex®-M33, Cortex-M23, Cortex-M55 processors) or dual-core platforms. Renesas RA Family FSP integrated TF-M support starting with FSP v2.0.0 for use on TrustZone-enabled MCUs.

TF-M uses PSA Crypto APIs and SCE Compatibility Mode for cryptographic operations. This support allows the customer to benefit from the Arm PSA Ecosystem software.

5.2 Internet Connectivity

The FSP has integrated Amazon FreeRTOS and MbedTLS support. Compatibility mode is used when integrating with this software combination.

The FSP also integrates Azure RTOS and NetX Duo support from FSP v3.0.0. Compatibility mode is used for this software combination.

Internet connectivity solutions using Protected mode are currently available from Renesas Partner wolfSSL Inc., providing optimum secure key storage.

5.3 Private Infrastructure Connectivity

For private infrastructure in industry or networking applications, it is recommended, if possible, to use Protected Mode with FSP Crypto APIs for increased security considerations.

If plaintext keys must be used, for example, to interface with existing infrastructure, then Compatibility Mode with PSA Crypto APIs must be used.

5.4 Production Support and Supply Chain Considerations

Protected Mode provides the following benefits for customers who are concerned with protecting their supply chain:

- Secure key injection can be conveniently performed in production for all MCUs.
- With RA Family MCUs, OEMs can further lock down the secure key storage and IP region for enhanced security control prior to hardware delivery downstream.

6. References

1. Renesas RA Family MCU RA6M4 Group User's Manual: Hardware
2. Renesas RA Family MCU RA6M3 Group User's Manual: Hardware
3. Renesas RA Family MCU Establishing and Protecting the Device Identity using SCE7 and Security MPU
4. Renesas RA Family MCU Establishing and Protecting the Device Identity using SCE9 and TrustZone
5. Renesas RA Family MCU Injecting Plaintext User Keys (Using Trusted Firmware M (TF-M) with FSP v2.03)
6. Renesas RA Family Injecting and Updating Secure User Keys (Document number: R11AN0496)

7. Website and Support

Visit the following URLs to learn about the RA family of microcontrollers, download tools and documentation, and get support.

RA Family Product Information	renesas.com/ra
Flexible Software Package (FSP)	renesas.com/ra/fsp
RA Family Product Support Forum	renesas.com/ra/forum
Renesas Support	renesas.com/support
Renesas Secure – IoT	renesas.com/iot-security

Revision History

Rev.	Date	Description	
		Page	Summary
1.00	May.18.21	-	First release
1.10	Oct.03.22	Multiple	Minor updates

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