



## Introduction

The current state of monitored services and hosts is determined by two components:

- The status of the check or host (i.e. **OK**, **WARNING**, **UP**, **DOWN**, etc.)
- The type of state the check or host is in.

There are two state types in Shinken Enterprise - **SOFT** states and **HARD** states. These state types are a crucial part of the monitoring logic, as they are used to determine when event handlers are executed and when notifications are initially sent out.

This document describes the difference between **SOFT** and **HARD** states, how they occur, and what happens when they occur.

## Service and Host Check Retries

In order to prevent false alarms from transient problems, Shinken Enterprise allows you to define how many times a service or host should be (re)checked before it is considered to have a "real" problem. This is controlled by the `max_check_attempts` option in the host and service definitions. Understanding how hosts and services are (re)checked in order to determine if a real problem exists is important in understanding how state types work.

## Soft States

Soft states occurs in the following situations...

- When a service or host check results in a non-OK or non-UP state and the service check has not yet been (re)checked the number of times specified by the `max_check_attempts` directive in the service or host definition. This is called a soft error.
- When a service or host recovers from a soft error. This is considered as a soft recovery.

The following things occur when hosts or services experience SOFT state changes:

- The SOFT state is logged.
- Event handlers are executed to handle the SOFT state.

SOFT states are only logged if you enabled the `log_service_retries` or `log_host_retries` options in your main configuration file.

The only important thing that really happens during a soft state is the execution of event handlers. Using event handlers can be particularly useful if you want to try and proactively fix a problem before it turns into a HARD state. The `$HOSTSTATETYPE` or `$SERVICESTATETYPE` macros will have a value of "**SOFT**" when event handlers are executed, which allows your event handler scripts to know when they should take corrective action. More information on event handlers can be found [:ref: here <advanced/eventhandlers>](#).

## Hard States

Hard states occur for hosts and services in the following situations:

- When a host or service check results in a non-UP or non-OK state and it has been (re)checked the number of times specified by the `max_check_attempts` option in the host or service definition. This is a hard error state.
- When a host or service transitions from one hard error state to another error state (e.g. **WARNING** to **CRITICAL**).
- When a service check results in a non-OK state and its corresponding host is either **DOWN** or **UNREACHABLE**.
- When a host or service recovers from a hard error state. This is considered to be a hard recovery.
- When a passive host check is received. Passive host checks are treated as **HARD**.

The following things occurs when hosts or services experience HARD state changes:

- The HARD state is logged.
- Event handlers are executed to handle the HARD state.
- Contacts are notified about the host or check problem or recovery.

The `$HOSTSTATETYPE$` or `$SERVICESTATETYPE$` data will have a value of "HARD" when event handlers are executed, which allows your event handler scripts to know when they should take corrective action.

## Example

Here's an example of how state types are determined, when state changes occur, and when event handlers and notifications are sent out. The table below shows consecutive checks of a check over time. The check has a `max_check_attempts` value of 3.

Time	Check Number	State Type	Type State	Changes	Notes
0	1	OK	HARD	No	Initial state
1	1	CRITICAL	SOFT	Yes	First detection of a non-OK state. Event handlers execute.
2	2	WARNING	SOFT	Yes	Check continues to be in a non-OK state. Event handlers execute.
3	3	CRITICAL	HARD	Yes	Max check attempts has been reached, so check goes into a HARD state. Event handlers execute and a problem notification is sent out. Check number is reset to 1 immediately after this happens.
4	1	WARNING	HARD	Yes	Check changes to a HARD WARNING state. Event handlers execute and a problem notification is sent out.
5	1	WARNING	HARD	No	Check stabilizes in a HARD problem state. Depending on what the notification interval for the service is, another notification might be sent out.
6	1	OK	HARD	Yes	Check experiences a HARD recovery. Event handlers execute and a recovery notification is sent out.
7	1	OK	HARD	No	Check is still OK.
8	1	UNKNOWN	SOFT	Yes	Check is detected as changing to a SOFT non-OK state. Event handlers execute
9	2	OK	SOFT	Yes	Check experiences a SOFT recovery. Event handlers execute, but notification are not sent, as this wasn't a "real" problem. State type is set HARD and check number is reset to 1 immediately after this happens.
10	1	OK	HARD	No	Check stabilizes in an OK state.