Why choose Red Hat Enterprise Linux over CentOS Stream for production use

Start planning your migration from CentOS Linux® now to ensure business and development continuity.

The CentOS Project will discontinue updates and releases of CentOS Linux between 2021 and 2024. As a result, CentOS Linux users must migrate to a new operating system to continue receiving updates, patches, and new features. This presents an opportunity to reassess your organization's needs and migrate to a platform that will support your business now and in the future.

CentOS Stream is a continuously delivered distribution that lets open source community members contribute to Red Hat® Enterprise Linux in tandem with Red Hat developers. CentOS Stream may seem like a natural choice to replace CentOS Linux, but it is not designed for production use. It is intended as a development platform for Red Hat partners and others that want to participate and collaborate in the Red Hat Enterprise Linux ecosystem. Consequently, running CentOS Stream in production environments presents many challenges compared to enterprise-ready distributions like Red Hat Enterprise Linux.

This checklist reviews four key reasons for choosing Red Hat Enterprise Linux over CentOS Stream as a replacement for CentOS Linux.

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1   Life cycle

Long-term, supported operating system life cycles deliver the increased stability and return on investment that enterprise organizations need to be successful.

Each major release stream of CentOS Stream will receive updates and patches for only five years. As a result, you will need to upgrade to new release streams more frequently. You will likely need to perform these upgrades manually, as the community has not developed in-place upgrade tools for CentOS Stream. And the CentOS Project does not offer commercial support for CentOS Stream users, so you must handle all platform support issues yourself.

A Red Hat Enterprise Linux subscription includes at least 10 years of updates and support—including access to advanced security features, patches, and guidance—for major releases. Red Hat also offers in-place upgrade tools to make moving to a new major release easier and faster. Finally, your subscription includes Red Hat Insights, a unique managed service that uses predictive analytics and deep domain expertise to help you better manage your IT environment throughout the entire Red Hat Enterprise Linux release life cycle.

2   Updates

A consistent, up-to-date IT environment is essential for maintaining security and compliance, operational efficiency, and service availability.

CentOS Stream updates can be released at any time, without warning. If your organization updates groups of systems at varying cadences, you may be at significant risk for operating system version and configuration drift across your enterprise. When using CentOS Stream, you must closely inspect, analyze, monitor, and manage your updates—a tedious, time-consuming, and continuous process—to avoid inconsistencies in your IT environment. And, because CentOS Stream does not support live kernel patching, you must restart systems when performing updates, causing greater disruption.

Red Hat issues Red Hat Enterprise Linux updates and minor releases at a predictable, production-friendly cadence—with complete documentation—allowing you to plan, update, and maintain your systems more easily. Plus, all subscriptions can access live kernel patches for critical and important Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures (CVEs) at no extra cost, helping you reduce system downtime due to update processes.

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3 Security and compliance

Enterprise organizations need to ensure compliance with corporate, regulatory, and industry requirements while protecting their systems from security threats and supporting new business objectives.

CentOS Stream updates include undifferentiated security patches, bug fixes, and other changes. All are delivered in a single package — without documentation — so you cannot choose which security updates you apply, or when you apply them. Consequently, you must completely update your systems to apply security patches. Additionally, CentOS Stream does not carry any security standards certifications, making it difficult to ensure compliance. To perform security audits, you must inspect, analyze, and prove the security of the CentOS Stream code yourself.

Red Hat Enterprise Linux provides built-in security features, security certifications, and simpler ways to maintain compliance. Automated security tools, regular updates and patch releases, and accessible expertise safeguard your environment. Included with your subscription, Red Hat Insights delivers continuous vulnerability alerts and targeted guidance to help you maximize uptime and avoid emergencies due to security issues, noncompliant settings, unpatched systems, and configuration drift. Security standards certification lets you use Red Hat Enterprise Linux across use cases with confidence. And a dedicated security team, scanning and remediation software, and ongoing access to new resources help you ensure continuous compliance.

4 Migration

Enterprises need streamlined migration tools and processes to ensure business continuity.

While migrating from CentOS Linux to CentOS Stream is simple, there is no easy process for moving from CentOS Stream to another Linux distribution if it does not meet your operational requirements over time.

Red Hat's Convert2RHEL tool lets you easily and quickly convert your CentOS Linux systems directly into Red Hat Enterprise Linux systems. Even so, the Convert2RHEL tool does not work with CentOS Stream, so you must reinstall your operating system if you decide to deploy CentOS Stream as an interim before moving to Red Hat Enterprise Linux.

Deploy a platform for the future

A consistent, intelligent operating foundation for modern IT and enterprise hybrid cloud environments, Red Hat Enterprise Linux delivers optimal benefits for your organization. Consistency across infrastructure footprints lets you manage applications and services using the same tools across locations. In fact, when used as the underpinning for other Red Hat products, the security, performance, interoperability, and innovation of Red Hat Enterprise Linux extend throughout your infrastructure to deliver more value. As a result, you can build and operate the hybrid cloud environment your business needs faster and more easily.

Learn more about Red Hat Enterprise Linux

Red Hat Enterprise Linux delivers an intelligent operating foundation for modern IT environments. Experience the value of Red Hat Enterprise Linux at redhat.com/rhel.

Discover your migration path choices

Red Hat offers several migration paths and programs to ease your migration to Red Hat Enterprise Linux. Choose your path forward at red.ht/centos.

About Red Hat

Red Hat helps customers standardize across environments, develop cloud-native applications, and integrate, automate, secure, and manage complex environments with award-winning support, training, and consulting services.

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