

□□□□ **Microsoft is approaching the next cutoff date in Windows 7's life cycle next month. Here's what is and isn't happening after October 31.**



Another Windows 7 cutoff approaches.

After [October 31](#), Microsoft will no longer provide its PC partners or systems builders with copies of Windows 7 Home Basic, Home Premium or Ultimate to preinstall on new PCs. This means that computer manufacturers will be able to continue to sell their stock of PCs running these versions of Windows 7, but they won't be allowed to replenish their supply.

(Last year on October 31, [Microsoft ceased selling shrink-wrapped copies of Windows 7 at retail](#) .)

However, the looming October 31 deadline does not apply to PCs preinstalled with Windows 7 Professional. Microsoft officials said again this week they [still have not yet gone public with the end-of-sales cutoff date for PCs running Windows 7 Pro](#). That lack of a firm cutoff date is a good thing for business users still leery of [Windows 8](#) and waiting to hear more about Windows Threshold/Windows 9 before committing to buying PCs with those versions of Windows preinstalled.

The October 31 cutoff date has no implications for end of support or downgrade rights for Windows 7.

Mainstream -- which means free, Microsoft-provided -- support for Windows 7 with Service Pack 1 installed isn't expiring until [January 13, 2015](#). Microsoft will continue to provide security fixes for Windows 7 for free until the end of extended support, which is [January 14, 2020](#) -- unless Microsoft ends up extending that support date, as it did with Windows XP.

On the [downgrade rights front](#), users are still able to buy a new PC with an original-equipment-manufacturer license for a business edition of Windows and then install an earlier version. PCs with [Windows 8.1](#) Pro can be downgraded to Windows 7 Professional or Windows Vista Business. [Microsoft volume licensees don't have to worry about their manufacturer's downgrade rights provision](#); they have the right to downgrade to any prior version of Windows.

*This story originally posted as "[What happens to Windows 7 on October 31, 2014?](#)" on ZDNet.*