Converting from an RPM-based Linux distribution to RHEL using Red Hat Insights

Instructions for a conversion from CentOS Linux 7 to Red Hat Enterprise Linux 7 using Red Hat Insights
Red Hat Insights 2023 Converting from an RPM-based Linux distribution to RHEL using Red Hat Insights

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Abstract

This document provides instructions on how to convert your operating system from CentOS Linux to RHEL 7 using Red Hat Insights.
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This document provides instructions on how to convert your operating system from CentOS Linux to Red Hat Enterprise Linux (RHEL) 7 using Red Hat Insights.
MAKING OPEN SOURCE MORE INCLUSIVE

Red Hat is committed to replacing problematic language in our code, documentation, and web properties. We are beginning with these four terms: master, slave, blacklist, and whitelist. Because of the enormity of this endeavor, these changes will be implemented gradually over several upcoming releases. For more details, see our CTO Chris Wright’s message.
PROVIDING FEEDBACK ON RED HAT DOCUMENTATION

We appreciate your feedback on our documentation. Let us know how we can improve it.

Submitting feedback through Jira (account required)

1. Log in to the Jira website.
2. Click Create in the top navigation bar.
3. Enter a descriptive title in the Summary field.
4. Enter your suggestion for improvement in the Description field. Include links to the relevant parts of the documentation.
5. Click Create at the bottom of the dialogue.
Red Hat Insights 2023 Converting from an RPM-based Linux distribution to RHEL using Red Hat Insights

This document is provided as a Service Preview and only includes or highlights features that are new as part of the public Service Preview. It is under development and is subject to substantial change. Consider the included information incomplete and use it with caution. This content will later be incorporated into the regular product documentation available at Product Documentation for Red Hat Insights 2023.
KEY MIGRATION TERMINOLOGY

While the following migration terms are commonly used in the software industry, these definitions are specific to Red Hat Enterprise Linux (RHEL).

Update

Sometimes called a software patch, an update is an addition to the current version of the application, operating system, or software that you are running. A software update addresses any issues or bugs to provide a better experience of working with the technology. In RHEL, an update relates to a minor release, for example, updating from RHEL 8.1 to 8.2.

Upgrade

An upgrade is when you replace the application, operating system, or software that you are currently running with a newer version. Typically, you first back up your data according to instructions from Red Hat. When you upgrade RHEL, you have two options:

- **In-place upgrade:** During an in-place upgrade, you replace the earlier version with the new version without removing the earlier version first. The installed applications and utilities, along with the configurations and preferences, are incorporated into the new version.

- **Clean install:** A clean install removes all traces of the previously installed operating system, system data, configurations, and applications and installs the latest version of the operating system. A clean install is ideal if you do not need any of the previous data or applications on your systems or if you are developing a new project that does not rely on prior builds.

Operating system conversion

A conversion is when you convert your operating system from a different Linux distribution to Red Hat Enterprise Linux. Typically, you first back up your data according to instructions from Red Hat.

Migration

Typically, a migration indicates a change of platform: software or hardware. Moving from Windows to Linux is a migration. Moving a user from one laptop to another or a company from one server to another is a migration. However, most migrations also involve upgrades, and sometimes the terms are used interchangeably.

- **Migration to RHEL:** Conversion of an existing operating system to RHEL

- **Migration across RHEL:** Upgrade from one version of RHEL to another
CHAPTER 1. SUPPORTED CONVERSION PATHS

IMPORTANT

Red Hat recommends that you seek the support of Red Hat Consulting services to ensure that the conversion process is smooth.

Currently, it is possible to convert your systems from the following Linux distributions, architectures, and versions to the corresponding minor version of RHEL listed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Supported conversion paths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source OS</th>
<th>Source version</th>
<th>Target OS and version</th>
<th>Architecture</th>
<th>Product Variant</th>
<th>Available Conversion Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alma Linux</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>RHEL 8.8</td>
<td>64-bit Intel</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Command-line interface, Satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>RHEL 8.6</td>
<td>64-bit Intel</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Command-line interface, Satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CentOS Linux</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>RHEL 8.5</td>
<td>64-bit Intel</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Command-line interface, Satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>RHEL 7.9</td>
<td>64-bit Intel</td>
<td>Server</td>
<td>Command-line interface, Satellite, Red Hat Insights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oracle Linux</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>RHEL 8.8</td>
<td>64-bit Intel</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Command-line interface, Satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>RHEL 7.9</td>
<td>64-bit Intel</td>
<td>Server</td>
<td>Command-line interface, Satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Linux</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>RHEL 8.8</td>
<td>64-bit Intel</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Command-line interface, Satellite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>RHEL 8.6</td>
<td>64-bit Intel</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Command-line interface, Satellite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the last available minor version of CentOS Linux is CentOS Linux 8.5, it is not possible to convert from CentOS Linux 8 directly to the latest available minor version of RHEL 8.
In addition to the above supported conversion paths, it is also possible to perform an unsupported conversion from Scientific Linux to RHEL. For information about unsupported conversions, see How to perform an unsupported conversion from a RHEL-derived Linux distribution to RHEL.

**IMPORTANT**

Conversions from CentOS Stream to RHEL are not currently possible.

For information about Red Hat’s support policy for Linux distribution conversions, see Convert2RHEL Support Policy.

**NOTE**

If you are converting to RHEL 8.5, it is recommended to update your system to the latest version of RHEL after the conversion.
CHAPTER 2. CONVERSION METHODS

Depending on your requirements, you can convert to RHEL by using one of the following methods:

- **Converting by using the command-line interface** - Use this method to convert a small number of servers, or to convert a large number of servers at scale by using custom automation.
  
  **NOTE**
  
  If you have a Satellite subscription but plan to convert by using the command-line interface, you can access the required RHEL packages through Satellite instead of using the Red Hat Content Delivery Network (CDN).

  For more information about how to convert by using the command-line interface, see Planning a RHEL conversion and Converting using the command-line.

- **Converting by using Satellite** - Use this method to convert a large number of servers at scale. To convert by using Satellite, you must have a Satellite subscription. For more information about how to convert by using Satellite, see Converting a Host to Red Hat Enterprise Linux.

- **Converting by using Red Hat Insights** - Use this method to convert multiple systems in a user-friendly GUI interface without needing a Satellite subscription. Systems must be connected to the internet. Systems are fully onboarded with Red Hat Insights after the conversion.

  **IMPORTANT**
  
  Currently, Red Hat Insights can be used only to run the preconversion analysis on CentOS Linux 7 systems.

  For more information about how to convert by using Red Hat Insights, see Planning a RHEL conversion.

  **IMPORTANT**
  
  Converting by using Red Hat Insights is currently available only as a Service Preview. It is under development and is subject to substantial change.
CHAPTER 3. PLANNING A RHEL CONVERSION

The automated conversion process is performed on a running system. The Convert2RHEL utility replaces all RPM packages from the original Linux distribution by their RHEL version. At the end of the process, it is necessary to restart the system to boot the RHEL kernel.

Packages that are available only in the original distribution and do not have corresponding counterparts in RHEL repositories, and third-party packages, which originate neither from the original Linux distribution nor from RHEL, are not affected by the conversion. Red Hat does not provide support for third-party packages that are left unchanged during the conversion process. See the Red Hat policy on supporting third-party software.

NOTE

The Convert2RHEL utility does not directly affect local users and their data in the /home and /srv directories. However, Convert2RHEL cannot control actions that RPM package scriptlets perform during the conversion process.

You should consider the following before converting your system to RHEL:

- **Architecture** - The source OS must be installed on a system with 64-bit Intel architecture. It is not possible to convert with other system architectures.

- **Security** - Systems in FIPS mode are not supported for conversion.

- **Kernel** - Systems using kernel modules that do not exist in RHEL kernel modules are not currently supported for conversion. Red Hat recommends disabling or uninstalling foreign kernel modules before the conversion and then enabling or reinstalling those kernel modules afterwards. Unsupported kernel modules include:
  - Kernel modules for specialized applications, GPUs, network drivers, or storage drivers
  - Custom compiled kernel modules built by DKMS

- **Public clouds** - Conversions on public clouds are supported in the following situations:
  - Alma Linux, CentOS Linux, and Rocky Linux - Using RHSM for the following:
    - Bring Your Own Subscription instances on Amazon Web Services (AWS), Microsoft Azure, and Google Cloud
    - User-provided custom images on all public clouds
  - Oracle Linux - Using RHSM for user-provided custom images on all public clouds. Convert2RHEL is unable to access RHEL packages through Red Hat Update Infrastructure (RHUI) during the conversion of both CentOS Linux and Oracle Linux.

- **High Availability** - Systems using high availability cluster software by Red Hat or third parties are not currently tested or supported for conversion to RHEL. Red Hat recommends migrating to newly installed RHEL systems to ensure the integrity of these environments.

- **Identity Management** - Performing an in-place conversion of a FreeIPA server is not supported. For more information about how to migrate a FreeIPA deployment to IdM, see Migrating to IdM on RHEL 7 from FreeIPA on non-RHEL Linux distributions and Migrating to IdM on RHEL 8 from FreeIPA on non-RHEL Linux distributions.
CHAPTER 4. PREPARING FOR A RHEL CONVERSION USING INSIGHTS

IMPORTANT

Converting by using Red Hat Insights is currently available only as a Service Preview. It is under development and is subject to substantial change.

Before running the pre-conversion analysis by using Red Hat Insights and performing the conversion, you must first complete all necessary preparation steps.

Prerequisites

- You are planning to convert CentOS Linux 7 systems to Red Hat Enterprise Linux (RHEL) 7. Conversions from CentOS Linux 8 and other Linux distributions must be performed in the command-line or Satellite.
- You have an account and activation key at Red Hat Customer Portal. For more information, see Getting started with activation keys on the Hybrid Cloud Console.
- You have stopped important applications, database services, and any other services that store data to reduce the risk of data integrity issues.
- You have temporarily disabled antivirus software to prevent the conversion from failing.
- You have disabled or adequately reconfigured any configuration management system, such as Salt, Chef, Puppet, Ansible, to not attempt to restore the original system.
- The sos package is installed. You must use this package to generate an sosreport that is required when opening a support case for the Red Hat Support team.
- You have enabled Simple Content Access (SCA). Red Hat accounts created after July 15, 2022 have SCA enabled by default.

Procedure

1. Ensure that you have a RHEL subscription. You can obtain a subscription using one of the following methods:
   a. Get a no-cost RHEL Developer Subscription for Individuals. The Developer Subscription is limited to sixteen servers.
   b. Start a 60-day free trial for a RHEL subscription. You can cancel this trial at any time.
   c. Contact the Red Hat Sales team for assistance. If you plan to convert a large number of servers, Red Hat recommends coordinating with the Sales team.
2. Back up your systems and verify that they can be restored if needed.
3. Check Known issues and limitations and verify that your system is supported for conversion. Apply workarounds where applicable.
4. Ensure that the standard CentOS Linux kernel is the booted kernel. If the kernel your system is booted into is not the standard kernel, change the default kernel to the standard kernel and reboot your system to apply the changes. For more information, see Making Persistent Red Hat Insights 2023 Converting from an RPM-based Linux distribution to RHEL using Red Hat Insights 12
Changes to a GRUB 2 Menu Using the grubby Tool.

5. If you are converting with a firewall or through a proxy server, ensure that you have access to the following connections:

- https://ftp.redhat.com
- https://cdn-ubi.redhat.com
- https://cdn.redhat.com
- https://subscription.rhsm.redhat.com - required only for systems with firewalls
- https://*.akamaiedge.net - required only for systems with firewalls
- https://static.redhat.com

6. Install the Red Hat client tools:

   a. Download the Red Hat GPG key:
      
      ```
      # curl -o /etc/pki/rpm-gpg/RPM-GPG-KEY-redhat-release https://www.redhat.com/security/data/fd431d51.txt
      ```

   b. Install the client-tools repository file:
      
      ```
      ```

   c. Install the client tools packages:
      
      ```
      # yum -y install subscription-manager rhc rhc-worker-script insights-client
      ```

7. Register your systems with Red Hat Subscription Manager (RHSM):

   ```
   # subscription-manager register --username <username> --password <password>
   ```

   Replace `username` and `password` with your Red Hat Account username and password credentials.

   **NOTE**

   You can provide your activation key and organization ID instead of the Red Hat Account username and password to authenticate:

   ```
   # subscription-manager register --activationkey <activation_key> --org <organization_ID>
   ```

8. Enable Remote Host Configuration:

   ```
   # rhc connect
   ```

   For more information on Remote Host Configuration, see the [Remote Host Configuration (rhc)](https://access.redhat.com/documentation/en-us/red_hat_enterprise_linux/7/html-single/rhcb_for_red_hat_enterprise_linux_chapter_9.html) Knowledgebase article.
9. Register your systems with Red Hat Insights:

   # insights-client --register

**Verification**

1. Log in to the Red Hat Hybrid Cloud Console and go to Red Hat Insights > RHEL > Inventory > Systems.

2. Verify that your CentOS Linux systems appear as expected.

**NOTE**

The only Red Hat Insights service you can use with registered CentOS Linux systems is the RHEL conversion. All other Insights services are available only after the conversion to RHEL.
CHAPTER 5. REVIEWING THE PRE-CONVERSION ANALYSIS REPORT USING INSIGHTS

IMPORTANT

Converting by using Red Hat Insights is currently available only as a Service Preview. It is under development and is subject to substantial change.

To assess whether your CentOS Linux systems can be converted to RHEL, run the Pre-conversion analysis for converting to RHEL task. The preconversion analysis generates a report that summarizes potential problems and suggests recommended solutions. The report also helps you decide whether it is possible or advisable to proceed with the conversion to RHEL.

Prerequisites

- The steps listed in Preparing for a RHEL conversion using Insights have been completed.

Procedure

1. Log in to the Red Hat Hybrid Cloud Console and turn on Preview mode by switching the Preview toggle to On in the menu bar.

2. Go to Red Hat Insights > RHEL > Automation toolkit > Tasks.

3. Locate the Pre-conversion analysis for converting to RHEL task and click Run task.

4. Select the CentOS Linux 7 systems that you want to analyze for conversion and click Execute task. The preconversion analysis utility generates a new report in the Activity tab. Select the report to view a summary of issues found in each system. You can also review further by selecting a system to view each issue and, when applicable, a potential remediation in detail.

Figure 5.1. Pre-conversion analysis for converting to RHEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System name</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>iqe-vm-tasks-ebc53b-356e-4504-8771-7b2b-99ae95eb</td>
<td>Success</td>
<td>The conversion cannot proceed. You must resolve existing issues to perform the conversion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each issue is assigned a severity level:

- **Inhibitor**: Would cause the conversion to fail because it is very likely to result in a deteriorated system state. This issue must be resolved before converting.
- **Skipped**: Could not run this test because of a prerequisite test failing. Could cause the conversion to fail.

- **Warning**: Would not cause the conversion to fail. System and application issues might occur after the conversion.

- **Info**: Informational with no expected impact to the system or applications.

5. After reviewing the report and resolving all reported issues, click **Run task again** to rerun the analysis and confirm that there are no issues outstanding.

6. Perform the conversion to RHEL in the command-line interface. See [Converting a RHEL system](#) for more information.

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**NOTE**

It is not currently possible to perform the conversion to RHEL using Red Hat Insights.
CHAPTER 6. TROUBLESHOOTING CONVERSIONS

This chapter lists troubleshooting resources and tips.

6.1. TROUBLESHOOTING RESOURCES

To help you troubleshoot issues that can occur during the conversion process, review the log messages that are printed to the console and log files.

Console Output

By default, only info, warning, error, and critical log level messages are printed to the console output by the Convert2RHEL utility. To also print debug messages, use the --debug option with the convert2rhel command.

Logs

- The /var/log/convert2rhel/convert2rhel.log file lists debug, info, warning, error, and critical messages.

- The /var/log/convert2rhel/rpm_va.log file lists all package files on the unconverted system that a user has modified. This output is generated by the rpm -Va command, which is run automatically unless the --no-rpm-va option is used with the convert2rhel command.

6.2. FIXING DEPENDENCY ERRORS

During a conversion from a different Linux distribution to RHEL, certain packages might be installed without some of their dependencies.

Prerequisites

- You have successfully completed the conversion to RHEL. See Converting to a RHEL system for more information.

Procedure

1. Identify dependencies errors:

   # yum check dependencies

   If the command displays no output, no further actions are required.

2. To fix dependency errors, reinstall the affected packages. During this operation, the yum utility automatically installs missing dependencies. If the required dependencies are not provided by repositories available on the system, install those packages manually.

6.3. TROUBLESHOOTING ISSUES WITH RED HAT INSIGHTS CONVERSIONS

The following issues might occur when using Red Hat Insights to convert to RHEL.

6.3.1. Missing systems in pre-conversion analysis task
When running the **Pre-conversion analysis for converting to RHEL** task in Red Hat Insights, CentOS Linux 7 systems that appeared correctly in **RHEL Inventory** might not appear in the list of available systems to run the pre-conversion analysis on. This issue occurs when the Remote Host Configuration (RHC) is disconnected.

**Procedure**

1. Log in to the **Red Hat Hybrid Cloud Console** and go to **Red Hat Insights > RHEL > Inventory > Systems**.

2. Select the affected system from the table.

3. In the **General Information** tab, go to the **System Status** card and verify the RHC status:
   a. If the RHC status is **Connected**, RHC is connected correctly.
   b. If the RHC status is **Not available**, RHC is disconnected. Proceed to the next step to reconnect RHC.

4. Unregister the system in your terminal:
   ```bash
   # rhc disconnect
   ```

5. To help with troubleshooting, set the **RHC systemd** service (**rhcd**) logging to the highest level:
   ```bash
   # sed -ie 's%error%trace%' /etc/rhc/config.toml
   ```

6. Register your system with Red Hat Insights and re-enable RHC in your terminal:
   ```bash
   # insights-client --register
   # rhc connect -a <activation_key> -o <organization_ID>
   ```

Replace **activation_key** and **organization_ID** with the activation key and organization ID from the Red Hat Customer Portal.

**Verification**

- Verify that you can select the system in the Pre-conversion analysis for converting to RHEL task.
  If the system still does not appear correctly, review error messages from **rhcd** and the **insights-client** tool:
  ```bash
  # journalctl -u rhcd
  # less /var/log/insights-client/insights-client.log
  ```

6.3.2. **Pre-conversion analysis task fails to complete**

After running the **Pre-conversion analysis for converting to RHEL** task, one or more of the systems can fail to generate a report with the error message **Task failed to complete for an unknown reason. Retry this task at a later time.** If this issue occurs, complete the steps below to troubleshoot.

**Procedure**
1. Verify if the affected system is unavailable, for example because of a network accessibility issue or because the system is shut off.

2. Review the **RHC systemd** service (**rhcd**) for errors:
   a. Stop **rhcd** in your terminal:
      ```
      # systemctl stop rhcd
      ```
   b. Set **rhcd** logging to the highest level:
      ```
      # sed -ie 's%error%trace%' /etc/rhc/config.toml
      ```
   c. Restart **rhcd**:
      ```
      # systemctl start rhcd
      ```
   d. Review error messages posted by **rhcd**:
      ```
      # journalctl -u rhcd
      ```

3. Review the **rhc-worker-script** log file for errors:
   ```
   # less /var/log/rhc-worker-script/rhc-worker-script.log
   ```

### 6.4. KNOWN ISSUES AND LIMITATIONS

The following issues and limitations are known to occur during the conversion:

- Systems that connect to the Internet using an HTTP proxy server cannot convert using Red Hat CDN or Satellite through RHSM. To work around this problem, enable HTTP proxy for yum and then configure the HTTP proxy for RHSM:
  1. Configure yum to use an HTTP proxy as described in How to enable proxy settings for yum command on RHEL?
  2. Configure a repository as described in Configuring Yum and Yum Repositories pointing to one of the following URLs:
     - For CentOS Linux and Oracle Linux 7: https://cdn-public.redhat.com/content/public/addon/dist/client-tools/server/7/7Server/x86_64/os/
     - For Alma Linux, CentOS Linux, Oracle Linux, and Rocky Linux 8: https://cdn-public.redhat.com/content/public/addon/dist/client-tools8/8/x86_64/os/
  3. Install the **subscription-manager** package from the repository you configured.
  4. Configure HTTP proxy for RHSM as described in How to configure HTTP Proxy for Red Hat Subscription Management.
  5. Perform the conversion to RHEL. (BZ#1965487)
• UEFI systems with Secure Boot enabled are not supported for conversion. To work around this issue, disable Secure Boot before the conversion and then re-enable after the conversion is complete. (BZ#2057229)

• If you are registered to RHSM and are using RHSM credentials to convert, the system is re-registered and the original RHSM registration is not restored if a rollback is performed during the conversion. To work around this issue, register your system again with RHSM after the rollback.

• If you are converting by using Red Hat Insights, running two RHC daemon (rhcd) processes simultaneously prevents the pre-conversion analysis from running as expected. To prevent this issue, run only one rhcd process at a time. (HMS-2629)

6.5. OBTAINING SUPPORT

If you experience problems during the conversion, notify Red Hat so that these problems can be addressed.

IMPORTANT

If you are experiencing problems during the conversion, raise a Support case of Severity 3 or Severity 4 level only. For more details, see Production Support Terms of Service.

Prerequisites

• The sos package is installed. You must use this package to generate an sosreport that is required when opening a support case for the Red Hat Support team.

Procedure

• To obtain support, perform either of the following steps:
  • Open a support case:
    • Select RHEL 7 or RHEL 8 as the product, and provide an sosreport from your system.
    • Generate an sosreport on your system:
      
      ```bash
      # sosreport
      ```
      
      Note that you can leave the case ID empty.
    • Submit a bug report:
      • Open a bug, select RHEL 7 or RHEL 8 as the product, and select convert2rhel as the component.

For details on generating an sosreport, see the solution What is an sosreport and how to create one in Red Hat Enterprise Linux?.

For more information about opening and managing a support case on the Customer Portal, see the article How do I open and manage a support case on the Customer Portal?.

For information about Red Hat’s support policy for Linux distribution conversions, see Convert2RHEL Support Policy.
CHAPTER 7. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Converting from an RPM-based Linux distribution to RHEL
- How to perform an unsupported conversion from a RHEL-derived Linux distribution to RHEL
- Red Hat Enterprise Linux technology capabilities and limits
- Convert2RHEL FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)