Driver Shiproom Release Cadence Windows 2020

Last Updated: Jan 08, 2020

Windows as a Service has a well-established OS update release cadence.

> **Latest Cumulative Update (LCU)**: Monthly Quality and Security updates released during the second week. This is also known as the "B" release and is offered to all eligible Windows 10 devices through Windows Update (WU) scans.

> **Feature Updates**: Provide the latest feature experiences and quality fixes.

We have a shared goal of keeping devices up to date while providing users a high-quality experience. Recently when a driver update is released alongside OS updates, it has resulted in a poor experience and significantly impacted end-users. Occasionally, we have had other driver release incidents which occur outside of normal business hours (Redmond time) which impact our ability to intervene and prevent additional devices from receiving "poor" drivers. Additionally, we have received many requests to have a predictable driver release cadence from many partners.

To ensure we release quality drivers, reduce the risk of releasing drivers at the same time as OS changes and provide ecosystem partners a predictable driver release cadence; we are making the following changes for releasing drivers marked as needing "Microsoft Approval". Today, this includes:

- Flighted drivers: Drivers (Shipping Label) marked as **Automatic** = Critical Update (CU) or Dynamic Update (DU) or both
- Optional driver classes which always go through Shiproom approval

Predictable driver release windows: During OS update release timeframes, we will defer releasing drivers needing "Microsoft Approval" to WU and will resume automatic publishing after the deferral window.

1) **Monthly Quality Update "B" release**: Driver needing "Microsoft Approval" will not be released one day before and for one day after monthly security "B" release.

Monday	2nd Tuesday of each month	Wednesday
1 day before	"B" monthly security release day	1 day after

2) **Feature update offer via Windows Update**: Driver needing "Microsoft Approval" will not be released two days before and for two days after start of feature OS update rollout.

Before	Day Of	After
2 days before	Feature OS Rollout	2 days after

If there are known issues for feature update and driver compatibility, partners can request feature update offer block mitigation while a compatible driver update is being validated and posted to WU. For more information see:

      a. Feature Update Windows Update (WU) Offer Block Mitigation Request

3) **Weekends**: Driver needing "Microsoft Approval" will not be released from Friday until Sunday 5PM Pacific Time, unless the next day is in a deferral period.

Friday	Saturday	Sunday
No release for "Microsoft Approval" drivers		Release after 5PM Pacific time

4) **US Microsoft Holidays**: Drivers needing "Microsoft Approval" will not be released on Microsoft US Holidays

US Microsoft Holidays	2019	2020
New Year's Day	Tuesday Jan 01	Tuesday Jan 01
Martin Luther King Day	Monday Jan 21	Monday Jan 20
Presidents Day	Monday Feb 18	Monday Feb 17
Memorial Day	Monday May 27	Monday May 25
Fourth of July	Thursday Jul 04	Thursday Jul 03
Labor Day	Monday Sep 02	Monday Sep 07
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday Nov 28	Thursday Nov 26
Day after Thanksgiving	Friday Nov 29	Friday Nov 27
Christmas Eve	Tuesday Dec 24	Tuesday Dec 24
Christmas Day	Wednesday Dec 25	Wednesday Dec 25

5) **US Winter Holiday timeframe release moratorium**: During the US Winter Holiday season, for approximately two weeks driver shiproom will not be releasing ANY drivers, for calendar year 2019 this is December 13, 2019 through January 1, 2020 and for CY2020 this will be December 17, 2020 through January 1, 2021.

Please see the 2020 driver deferral periods in the Appendix calendars for additional dates.

Call to Action

We believe that creating a predictable driver release cadence will result in better update user experience across both Windows 10 OS and driver updates. We encourage ecosystem partners to *plan for their driver flighting and publication releases* in alignment with above cadence and help us improve the experience of our mutual users and customers.

Exception Process

We recognize the need for partners to release critical/security driver updates during the limited driver release windows and these will be handled via an exception process. For any drivers needing immediate release, please open a Hardware Dev Center Partner Support Request (ticket) with the keywords "**Driver release deferral exception request**" added to the title. Please also, include the following information in the ticket:

- Shipping Label ID(s)
- Reason for "Urgent Driver release request"
- Impact to end-users if driver release is delayed

For additional information to contact Hardware Dev Center Support, please see the **How Do I contact Hardware Dev Center Dashboard Support?** topic at https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-hardware/drivers/dashboard/hardware-dashboard-faq.

Appendix

FAQ:

What does this deferral mean for newly submitted drivers or drivers currently In-Flight?

- This deferral is for the actual "Release" of a driver needing "Microsoft Approval" (marked as Automatic or Dynamic Update) to WU. Newly submitted drivers and drivers currently In-Flight will proceed as they normally do.

2020 Driver Deferral Calendar:

** This calendar is subject to changes based on OS release timelines.

2020 CALENDAR

January
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

February
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

March
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
31					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

June
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

July
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
30	31					1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

September
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

October
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Legend
- Weekends
- Holidays
- LCU (B Update)

Feature Update Windows Update (WU) Offer Block Mitigation Request

In order to ensure that end users have a good post-update experience, when a driver has a known incompatibility with a feature update. Partners can request a temporary WU offer block (~30 – 60 days) so that Windows Update will not offer the feature update to devices running a driver version with a known incompatibility. The offer block will be removed once a partner has posted an updated driver (as Automatic and/or Dynamic) via Hardware Dev Center portal.

Mitigation type	Description	Criteria for application
Windows Update (WU) offer block	A temporary hold on offering an OS upgrade to a device. These devices are blocked until the fix is released via servicing, at which point the device is then unblocked. This does not impact media installs.	An issue that directly impacts the OS after upgrade, such as a driver crash, BSOD or data loss, security issues, connectivity loss, etc, for which a fix is in progress.

To request an offer block:

1) File a new feedback on MS Collaborate in the **EEAP Engagement** at: https://partner.microsoft.com/en-us/dashboard/collaborate/feedback/wits/bugs/create
2) Title must begin with **[WU offer block request] [IHV/ISV - Driver Name] [Impacted driver versions]**, i.e. [WU Offer block request] [Contoso – contoso.sys] [1.1 through 1.5]
3) Provide the following information in the **Repro Steps**

End user scenario: Description of how end user scenario is impacted, i.e. Garbled video playback after feature os update with graphics driver version X

Estimated impact (number of in-market devices):
Detailed Repro steps:
Block criteria (e.g., driver name + version, BIOS, HWIDs, etc):
Name and path of driver binary:
Found in OS version:
Workaround (if any):
Related OS bug (if any):
Driver owner: Name of IHV/ISV/partner creating fixed driver version
Requested lifetime of block – i.e. 30 days
Access to a device in Redmond, WA (Y/N/NA)
Repro rate (%)
Is this a regression caused by an OS change? [Release/Release]
Business impact (sales volume)