ESX 4 Patch Management Guide

ESX 4.0

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About This Book

This book, *ESX 4 Patch Management Guide*, provides background information on processing patches for ESX 4.0 hosts and describes how to use the `esxupdate` utility to apply software updates and to track software installed on ESX 4.0 hosts.

This book provides information specific to ESX 4.0 hosts and the `esxupdate` utility. It does *not* discuss the following:

- How to patch ESX 4.0 hosts automatically with the VMware Update Service and the VMware vCenter Update Manager. For information on these tools, see “ESX Patch Management Tools” on page 21.
- How to patch ESXi 4.0 hosts with the `vihostupdate` vSphere Command Line Interface (CLI). For information on `vihostupdate`, see “ESX Patch Management Tools” on page 21.
- How to patch versions of ESX released prior to version 4.0. For information on this process, see the *Patch Management for ESX Servers* tech note and the *ESX Server 3 Patch Management Guide*.
- How to upgrade ESX hosts. For information on upgrading, see the *vSphere Upgrade Guide*. For a list of VMware release definitions, see the VMware *Upgrade and Update Policy* by going to [http://www.vmware.com/support/policies/upgrade.html](http://www.vmware.com/support/policies/upgrade.html).

**Intended Audience**

This manual is intended for anyone who must manually apply patches to ESX 4.0 hosts. The information in this manual is written for system administrators who use a service console to manage ESX hosts.

**What’s Changed from ESX 3.x**

This manual has been updated from the *ESX Server 3 Patch Management Guide* to include new definitions and procedures that are unique to ESX 4.0.

**Document Feedback**

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**VMware vSphere Documentation**

The VMware vSphere documentation consists of the combined vCenter Server and ESX documentation set.
Technical Support and Education Resources

The following sections describe the technical support resources available to you. You can access the most current versions of this manual and other books by going to:

http://www.vmware.com/support/pubs

Online and Telephone Support

Use online support to submit technical support requests, view your product and contract information, and register your products. Go to http://www.vmware.com/support.

Customers with appropriate support contracts should use telephone support for the fastest response on priority 1 issues. Go to http://www.vmware.com/support/phone_support.

Support Offerings

Find out how VMware support offerings can help meet your business needs. Go to http://www.vmware.com/support/services.

VMware Education Services

VMware courses offer extensive hands-on labs, case study examples, and course materials designed to be used as on-the-job reference tools. For more information about VMware Education Services, go to http://mylearn1.vmware.com/mgrreg/index.cfm.
About the esxupdate Utility

You use the patch maintenance utility, esxupdate, to retrieve information about updates and extensions from VMware and third parties, to track installed software, and to apply software packages to ESX 4.0 hosts. You run esxupdate from the service console while you are logged on to an ESX 4.0 host as user root. You can run only one instance at a time on the same ESX 4.0 host.

A record of each installed bulletin is written to the /etc/vmware/esxupdate directory on the host. The record includes the bulletin ID, the installation time, the VIBs installed, and other details. This directory acts as a patch database and is used by esxupdate to query the patches installed on the host.

CAUTION This directory is read-only. If you change the contents, when esxupdate performs an integrity check, it will fail for the changed files. In such cases, esxupdate exits with an IntegrityError message. For more information, see “esxupdate Exit Codes and Error Messages” on page 19.
For ESX 4.0 hosts, there are four basic modes of `esxupdate`: Inspection mode, scan mode, test mode, and update mode.

- **Inspection mode.** Queries your system for bulletins and bulletin details. You use two commands to retrieve bulletin information: `esxupdate query` and `esxupdate info`.

- Use the `esxupdate query` command to display a list of bulletins installed on ESX 4.0 host. The output lists the bulletins in ascending installation order and includes the bulletin name, installation date, and a 40-character summary of the bulletin. All bulletins that are installed are listed. Bulletins that are superseded by another bulletin are considered obsolete and are not displayed in this output.

- Use the `esxupdate info` command to display information on the contents of one or more bulletins. The output includes the bulletin name, release date, and details about the metadata files, including the VIB packages that are part of the bulletin.

  You can use the `info` command for both installed and uninstalled bulletins. For more information, see “Retrieving Bulletin Information” on page 12.

- **Scan mode.** Determines which bulletins are applicable to the ESX 4.0 host by querying the bulletins in a depot and the bulletins installed on the host for bulletin and system dependencies. Use the `esxupdate scan` command before you install bulletins to determine which ones are applicable to the host. For more information, see “Scanning for Applicable Bulletins” on page 11.

- **Test mode.** Enables `esxupdate` to go through all installation operations without installing the specified bulletins. Test mode downloads the appropriate files, preloads the `esxupdate` depot cache for HTTP and FTP servers, checks for RPM package dependencies, and determines which RPMs to install. For more information, see “Staging an Installation” on page 13.

- **Update mode.** Installs bulletins on ESX 4.0 hosts. Use the `esxupdate update` command to install individual bulletins, a bundle zip, or an online depot. Update mode scans the depot for dependencies and handles them, if possible, before installing. For more information, see “Install Bulletins on an ESX 4.0 Host” on page 15.

For information on `esxupdate` syntax and commands, see “esxupdate Options and Commands” on page 17

**Patch Maintenance Strategy**

Use the following guidelines to manage patching for your ESX 4.0 hosts.

- Keep your environment as current as possible. Determine whether any bulletins are necessary for your environment and apply those bulletins. Minimize the change to your software environment whenever possible. For more information on determining bulletin applicability, see “Scanning for Applicable Bulletins” on page 11.

- Analyze the risk factor of applying the bulletin. For example, assess the virtual machine and ESX 4.0 host downtime requirements. The `scan` command provides the information you need to analyze risks and server downtime.

- Download and install roll-ups rather than individual bulletins. This method saves you download time and ensures, when dependencies exist, that your depot contains all necessary bulletins.

- For a multihost environment, set up patch depots on a centralized server that is accessible by all ESX hosts. Create a separate depot for each ESX version in your environment. Although you can put depots on an ESX host, VMware does not recommend it.
Customizing Your Patch Process

You can write custom scripts to automate your patch process. For example, you can create a cron job to periodically download roll-ups to a depot. You can write a script to scan the depot for applicable bulletins and install all at one time. If during the scan operation, esxupdate finds a bulletin that requires virtual machines to be powered off, you can write a script that puts them into maintenance mode.

If you use custom scripts to automate the ESX 3 patch process, you must update them to work with ESX 4.0. Specifically, upgrade your scripts to use the esxupdate -m option to point to the depot and to install multiple bulletins at one time.
Installing Updates

You must perform several procedures to up your patch environment and install bulletins on your ESX 4.0 hosts.

This chapter contains the following sections:

- “Bundle Zip Files” on page 11
- “Scanning for Applicable Bulletins” on page 11.
- “Retrieving Bulletin Information” on page 12.
- “Verifying Disk Space” on page 13.
- “Staging an Installation” on page 13.
- “Verifying Bulletin Installations” on page 16.

Bundle Zip Files

A bundle zip contains a metadata zip which defines the bulletins available for installation and also contains one or more packages. Each package is a VIB file that is translated into one RPM package during the installation process.

Scanning for Applicable Bulletins

To determine which bulletins in your depot are applicable to your ESX 4.0 host, use the esxupdate scan command. A bulletin is applicable if at least one VIB package applies to the ESX platform and it updates a package on the ESX host, or if it is a new package. When you scan a depot, by default the scan command only displays applicable bulletins that have updated or new packages. The --all option displays all of the bulletins including inapplicable bulletins.

If esxupdate can handle all dependencies and does not find any conflicts, it can install the patches included in the scan. If conflicts exist, they are listed in the scan output.

The following Example 1-1 shows the information returned from an esxupdate scan command on a depot.

Example 2-1. Example 1-1. scan Command Sample Output

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bulletin ID</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bul_1</td>
<td>2008-11-12</td>
<td>This is the bul_1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bul_2</td>
<td>2008-11-12</td>
<td>This is the bul_2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To scan for applicable bulletins

1 Log into the service console on the ESX 4.0 host as user root.

   If you do not have direct access to the ESX 4.0 host, connect remotely to the service console using ssh.

2 If the depot is not on the ESX 4.0 host, type the following command to enable an outgoing connection for the service console.
   esxcfg-firewall --allowOutgoing

3 Run the esxupdate scan command.

   NOTE You cannot run esxupdate in the current directory without -m or --bundle.

   ■ To scan applicable bulletins in a depot:
     esxupdate -m <metadataURL> scan
   ■ To scan for applicable bulletins in a bundle zip:
     esxupdate --bundle <bundleZipURL> scan
   ■ To list all the bulletins regardless of applicability or software platform, add the --all / -a option.

4 When you are done accessing the depot, reset the service console firewall to high security:
   esxcfg-firewall --blockOutgoing

For information on scanning, see “Scanning for Applicable Bulletins” on page 11. For information on esxupdate syntax and commands, see “esxupdate scan” on page 18.

Retrieving Bulletin Information

The esxupdate query and esxupdate info commands retrieve information about installed bulletins and bulletins that are in a depot or bundle zip.

To retrieve information about installed bulletins

1 From the service console, log on to the ESX 4.0 host as user root.

   If you do not have direct access to the ESX 4.0 host, connect remotely to the service console using ssh.

2 Run the esxupdate query or info command.

   ■ To retrieve a brief summary of all installed bulletins:
     esxupdate query
     This command lists all installed bulletins in ascending installation order and includes the installation date and a brief summary for each bulletin.

   ■ To retrieve details about bulletins returned by the query:
     esxupdate -b <bulletin1> -b <bulletin2> info

For information on esxupdate syntax and commands, see “esxupdate query” on page 18 and “esxupdate info” on page 18.

The following Example 2-2 shows the information returned when you run the esxupdate query command on an ESD 4.0 host.

Example 2-2. Example 1-2. query Command Sample Output

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bulletin ID</th>
<th>Installed Date</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bul_1</td>
<td>2008-07-08T19:55:04</td>
<td>This is the summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisco Swordfish Drop</td>
<td>071420082008-07-19T05:03:22</td>
<td>Swordfish VIB for COS only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To retrieve information about bulletins in a depot or bundle zip

1. From the service console, log on to the ESX 4.0 host as user root.
   
   If you do not have direct access to the ESX 4.0 host, connect remotely to the service console using ssh.

2. If the depot is not on the ESX 4.0 host, type the following command to enable an outgoing connection for the service console:
   
   esxcfg-firewall --allowOutgoing

3. Run the esxupdate info command.

   - To retrieve details of all bulletins in a metadata file:
     
     esxupdate -m <metadataURL> info

   - To retrieve details of specific bulletins in a depot:
     
     esxupdate -m <metadataURL> -b <BulletinID1> -b <BulletinID2> info

   - To retrieve detailed information on all bulletins in a bundle zip:
     
     esxupdate --bundle <bundleZipUrl> info

4. When you are done accessing the depot, reset the service console firewall to high security.
   
   esxcfg-firewall --blockOutgoing

For information on esxupdate syntax and commands, see “esxupdate info” on page 18.

This Example 1-3 shows the information returned when you run the esxupdate info command on a single installed bulletin.

Example 2-3. Example 1-3. info Command Sample Output

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Id</th>
<th>Driver 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Releasedate</td>
<td>Releasedate - 2008-11-17T11:28:42-07:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendor</td>
<td>VMware, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Wonderful driver 2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity</td>
<td>critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installdate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Self-contained bulletin with one Vib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kburl</td>
<td><a href="http://kb.vmware.com/selfservice/microsites">http://kb.vmware.com/selfservice/microsites</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td><a href="mailto:support@vmware.com">support@vmware.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of constituent VIBs:</td>
<td>cross_driver_2.1-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Verifying Disk Space

Check the following requirements to make sure the host system has enough disk space. (See Update)

- The /partition directory has at least 50MB of free space.
- The disk space allocated to the service console has an amount of free space that is twice the size of the bulletin to be installed.
- Before installing patches, use the stage command. See “Staging an Installation” on page 13.

Staging an Installation

Staging an installation allows esxupdate to perform the following tasks without installing any bulletins:

- Downloads the appropriate bulletins and VIB packages to the host to reduce downtime when a large number of updates must be installed
- Checks for VIB signature
Installing Bulletins

You use the `esxupdate` command to install bulletins. You can install any number of bulletins from one or more depots. You can install one or more bundle zip files. The bundle zip files are independent from any depot and can be located on the local ESX host, a CD-ROM drive, or any remote HTTP, NFS, or FTP server. When installing bulletins, keep in mind the following `esxupdate` behavior:

- If you do not specify bulletin IDs to install, `esxupdate` installs all applicable bulletins in the depot.
- If you specify one or more bulletin IDs to install, the following can happen:
  - If no dependencies exist, `esxupdate` installs only those bulletins.
  - If dependencies exist and a specified bulletin requires you to install one or more unspecified bulletins, you are given the option to install additional packages. These packages are installed if you enter `y`.

The host system should have the following space available to ensure space for the installation:

- A minimum of 24MB for the `/tmp` and `/boot` directories.
- A minimum of 100MB for the `/root` directory.
- In general, the installation requires twice the size of the downloaded bulletins.

Before you install bulletins or bundle zip files, you must run the `stage` command to download all packages, validate signatures, and check for dependencies and conflicts.

During the installation process, `esxupdate` validates each VIB package by using a set of signature keys. If any VIB package in a patch contains a missing or invalid signature, `esxupdate` does not install the bulletin.
After validating the bulletins, esxupdate performs the following tasks during the install:

- Filters out any packages that do not apply to the current version ESX.
- Checks for software dependencies and prerequisites, for example, if the bulletin is the correct ESX version, if virtual machines are powered off, and so on.
- Verifies the digital signatures of the packages in each bulletin.
- Checks for adequate disk space.
- Removes obsolete packages from the ESX 4.0 host.
- Installs the packages. Packages installed already or superseded by a newer installed version are not installed.
- Updates the initrd image, which ensures updated drivers are loaded on ESX for the next boot.

During the installation, if an esxupdate patch is available, the utility updates itself. If the initrd and driver configurations require changes, the changes are made after all bulletins are installed.

For information on installing bulletins, see “Install Bulletins on an ESX 4.0 Host” on page 15. For information on checking for patch dependencies, see “Scanning for Applicable Bulletins” on page 11.

Install Bulletins on an ESX 4.0 Host

The installation process is recorded in the esxupdate.log file. By default, this file is located in the /var/log/vmware directory.

To install bulletins on an ESX host

1. Verify that the host has enough disk space to perform the installation.
   
   See “Verifying Disk Space” on page 13.

2. From the service console, log on to the ESX 4.0 host as user root.

   If you do not have direct access to the ESX 4.0 host, connect remotely to the service console using ssh.

3. If the depot is not on the ESX 4.0 host, type the following command to enable an outgoing connection for the service console.

   esxcfg-firewall --allowOutgoing

4. Scan the desired bulletins to determine if they are applicable.

   See “To scan for applicable bulletins” on page 12.

   **NOTE** esxupdate never reboots your host.

5. Run esxupdate update command.

   - To install all applicable bulletins in the depot:
     
     `esxupdate -m <metadataURL> update`

   - To install specific bulletins in the depot:
     
     `esxupdate -m <metadataURL> -b <Bulletin1> update`

   - To install all applicable bulletins in a bundle zip:
     
     `esxupdate --bundle <rollupBundleZipURL> update`

6. If necessary, reboot the system.
7 Run the esxupdate query command to verify the installation was a success. See “Verifying Bulletin Installations” on page 16.

8 When you are done accessing the depot, reset the service console firewall to high security:
   esxcfg-firewall --blockOutgoing

Verifying Bulletin Installations

This command lets you verify all installed bulletins were installed correctly, that none were missing or had the wrong version number.

1 If necessary, log on to the ESX 4.0 host as user root.

If you do not have direct access to the ESX 4.0 host, connect remotely to the service console using ssh.

2 If the depot is not on the ESX 4.0 host, type the following command to enable an outgoing connection for the service console.
   esxcfg-firewall --allowOutgoing

3 Run the esxupdate query command.
   esxupdate query

Verify the bulletin you installed is in the return list.
This chapter contains the following sections:

- “esxupdate Options and Commands” on page 17.
- “esxupdate Exit Codes and Error Messages” on page 19.

esxupdate Options and Commands

The esxupdate utility is a patch maintenance tool for ESX. You use it to review the contents of a bulletin, install software, and track installed software.

You run esxupdate from the ESX service console while logged in as user root. The activity of the tool is recorded in the esxupdate.log file. By default, this file is located in the /var/log/vmware directory.

To see help information for esxupdate, run the utility with no arguments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Flag</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| --meta <metadataURL> | -m   | Specifies the location of metadata file inside a depot. Can be repeated. A metadata URL may point to a vendor's web site directly, if vendors make their updates available online, or to a locally mirrored copy. When you use the -m flag without the -b flag, esxupdate selects all the bulletins in the metadata. For example:
  (NFS): esxupdate -m file:///var/updates/esx4/metadata.zip |
| -b <BulletinID> | -b   | Specifies one or more bulletins. If not specified, all bulletins are handled. Must be combined with the -m or --bundle options. Use one -b flag for each bulletin to install. For example:
esxupdate -m <metadataURL> esxupdate -b ESX350-200802055-BG -b ESX350-200803066-SG |
| --bundle <bundlezipURL> | | Specifies the location of an offline bundle zip. esxupdate downloads and unpacks the zip. Can be used with -b option to select bulletins within the bundle zip. Can be repeated. Use with the scan, info, stage, update commands. For example:
esxupdate --bundle <bundleZipURL> scan |
| --http_proxy <proxy_server>:<port> | | Use <proxy_server> at <port> for HTTP connections. |
esxupdate Commands

Table 3-2. esxupdate Commands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>esxupdate info</td>
<td>Displays information about bulletins, including a brief summary, and build and install times. This command retrieves the bulletin definitions from the metadata or the patch database on the ESX host (/etc/vmware/esxupdate). See “Retrieving Bulletin Information” on page 12.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Syntax for bulletins in a depot: | esxupdate --meta <metadataURL> info
esxupdate --bundle <bundle-zip URL> info |
| Syntax for bulletins in the patch database: | esxupdate --bundle <bundle-zip URL> --all info |
| esxupdate query | Returns a list, in install order, of all bulletins installed on the ESX host. See “To retrieve information about installed bulletins” on page 12. |
| esxupdate scan | Returns a list of the applicable bulletins in a depot metadata or in a bundle zip. Use with --all option to return a list of all bulletins. See “Scanning for Applicable Bulletins” on page 11. |
| esxupdate stage | Downloads the appropriate VIBs for the selected bulletins, preloads the esxupdate depot cache for HTTP and FTP servers, and checks for VIB and RPM dependencies. For example: esxupdate --stage --meta <metadataURL> --bundle <bundle-zip URL> --all | See “Staging an Installation” on page 13. |
| esxupdate update | Checks the specified bulletins for dependencies, checks the ESX host for dependencies, determines which bulletins to install, and installs them on the ESX host. See “Install Bulletins on an ESX 4.0 Host” on page 15. |
| Syntax | esxupdate --stage --meta <metadataURL> --bundle <bundle-zip URL> --all | esxupdate --update --stage --meta <metadataURL> --bundle <bundle-zip URL> --all |
### esxupdate Exit Codes and Error Messages

**Table 3-3. esxupdate Error Codes and Error Messages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exit Code</th>
<th>Error Message</th>
<th>Explanation and Workaround</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Command completed successfully.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not root. <strong>esxupdate</strong> must be entered as the root user.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Invalid command line syntax or arguments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>LockingError</td>
<td>Cannot acquire lock. Another <strong>esxupdate</strong> is running.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MetadataDownloadError</td>
<td>Downloading or extraction of data failed. Verify that the correct URL was specified, and is reachable. Use <strong>esxcfg-firewall</strong> to open additional ports. If the target URL or file has been copied from another source, verify that it has been copied correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MetadataFormatError</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>VibeDownloadError</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>VibeFormatError</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>VibeIOError</td>
<td>Indicates an error reading or writing files to or from local storage. Verify that adequate free space exists on mounted file systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>NoMatchError</td>
<td>VIB or Bulletin ID not in metadata, or requested VIBs or bulletin do not apply to host platform (stage, update only).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>DependencyError</td>
<td><strong>esxupdate</strong> was unable to resolve dependencies. This condition is due to conflicts between any of the requested VIBs, required dependencies and the host, packages on the host obsoleting requested VIBs or their requirements, or due to one or more requirements not being found in the metadata (stage, update only). This condition is different from UnsatisfiedDependencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>PackageManagerError</td>
<td>RPM or ipkg transaction failed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>MaintenanceModeError</td>
<td>ESX host is not in maintenance mode when it must be, or hostd is down. Maintenance mode cannot be determined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>PostScriptError</td>
<td>A post script exited with a nonzero status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>VibeSigMissingError</td>
<td>One or more VIBs contain invalid or untrusted signature data. If the data has been copied from another source, verify that it has been copied correctly. Verify that the host date is set correctly. If problems persist, contact VMware Support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>VibeSigVersionError</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>VibeSigFormatError</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>VibeSigInvalidError</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>UnsatisfiedDependencies</td>
<td>Additional VIBs are required for installation, and the user declined to install them. This condition is specifically different from DependencyError. While dependencies were successfully resolved, they could not be automatically installed due to user input (CLI) or failure of the caller to specify required VIBs on the command line (HA or CLI).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>VibeSigDigestError</td>
<td>Not an error. The system must be rebooted to complete the update.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>VibeSigVersionError</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>VibeSigFormatError</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>VibeSigInvalidError</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>Not a VIB archive, missing files, files in wrong order, descriptor.xml invalid.</td>
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<td>VibeIOError</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>Not an error. The system must be rebooted to complete the update.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequently Asked Questions

When an RPM on my ESX host has a Linux equivalent, can I use the Linux RPM to update my system?
No. VMware recommends that you update your ESX 4.0 host with RPMs supplied by VMware.

Can I remove installed VMware patches from my ESX host?
No. Patches cannot be removed after they are installed.

Should the build number of the ESX host change after I apply a patch?
It is normal for some portions of the ESX 4.0 software installation to change build numbers when patches are applied. For information on determining the build number for each of the components of your ESX installation, see the VMware knowledge base article, KB 1001179.
ESX Patch Management Tools

This section describes three patch management tools that VMware provides in addition to the esxupdate utility:

- About VMware vCenter Update Manager
- About vSphere Host Update Utility
- About vihostupdate vSphere CLI

You can access the most current versions of the documentation for each tool by going to http://www.vmware.com/support/pubs.

You can find information about the VMware Upgrade and Update Policy by going to http://www.vmware.com/support/policies/upgrade.html.

About VMware vCenter Update Manager

VMware vCenter Update Manager is an optional module for vCenter Server that periodically downloads patch information from the Internet. Update Manager performs user-defined scan operations on ESX 4.0 and ESXi 4.0 hosts for patch compliance. If it determines a patch is required, VMware vCenter Update Manager downloads the patch and installs it based on user-defined configurations. VMware vCenter Update Manager can perform scan and installation operations with latest patches in an air gap or semi-air gap environment that has no Internet access, by using a shared repository. The Update Manager plug-in is an optional feature that requires vSphere Client.

The VMware vCenter Update Manager documentation consists of release notes, an administration guide, and online help integrated with the VMware vCenter Update Manager vSphere Client plug-in.

About vSphere Host Update Utility

You can use vSphere Host Update Utility to patch ESXi 4.0 hosts. vSphere Host Update Utility finds applicable patches and enables you to install them. You have the option to install vSphere Host Update Utility when you install the vSphere Client. By default, the utility is not installed.

The vSphere Host Update Utility is documented in the vSphere Upgrade Guide.

About vihostupdate vSphere CLI

The vihostupdate vSphere CLI command can scan ESX/ESXi hosts for installed patches, enforce software update policies, and install software patches. It can perform software updates to ESX/ESXi images and install and update ESX/ESXi extensions such as VMkernel modules, drivers, and CIM providers. For ESX/ESXi 4.0 hosts, run vihostupdate. For ESX/ESXi 3.5 hosts, run vihostupdate35.

See the vSphere CLI Installation and Reference Guide and the vSphere Upgrade Guide.
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Updates for the ESX 4 Patch Management Guide

Last Updated: February 17, 2010

This document provides updates to the ESX 4.0 version of the ESX 4 Patch Management Guide. Updated descriptions, procedures, and graphics are organized by page number so that you can easily locate the areas of the guide that have changes. If the change spans multiple sequential pages, this document provides the starting page number only.

The following is an update to the ESX 4 Patch Management Guide:

Updates to the Verifying Disk Space section on Page 13

In the Verifying Disk Space section, the first and second list item should be:

- The / partition has at least 50MB of free space.
- The disk space allocated to the service console has an amount of free space that is thrice the size of the bulletin to be installed