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Upgrading from outdated Windows® devices to Android™:

A warehouse FAQ with Mark Wheeler

Mobile computing is critical for any future-ready warehouse. It allows workers to optimize operations on the go, handle challenges as they arise and keep pace with increasing demands.

So now that Microsoft is ending support for its Windows operating systems (OS) in mobile computing devices, what does that mean for your Windows-based devices, your warehouse—and your business? Zebra Supply Chain Solutions Director Mark Wheeler regularly fields this and many other related concerns. Keep reading to learn what he has to say about some of your most pressing questions.
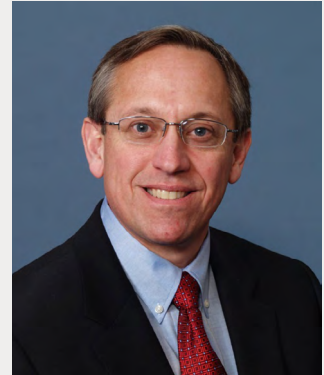
Mark Wheeler

Director, Supply Chain Solutions Zebra Technologies

Working closely with supply chain ops teams, solution partners and product development experts, this 30-year industry veteran aligns emerging technology solutions with customer needs.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When is Microsoft ending support for Windows Embedded and mobile operating systems?

A: Microsoft cut off extended support for Windows® Embedded 6.5 and mobile operating systems on January 1, 2020. For Windows® Embedded Compact 7.0, support will end January 1, 2021.

Q: What does "the end of Microsoft support" mean, exactly?

A: During the support life cycle of any of its operating systems, Microsoft continues to provide bug and security fixes, technical support and other updates. This life cycle typically lasts for 10 years from the date of the product's initial release, at which point it reaches its "end of support," meaning updates, fixes and support are no longer provided.

Q: How does "the end of Microsoft support" affect me?

A: Once your operating systems reach their "end of support," Microsoft will no longer provide bug fixes, time zone updates, new feature service packs or technical support for any problems that may occur. But most importantly, you'll no longer receive essential security updates to address vulnerabilities and prevent breaches.

Q: Should I upgrade now?

A: Yes. If you don't upgrade the devices your workers use every day, you're more likely to experience security breaches and/or costly downtime. In order to keep your systems secure—and keep up with increasing demands—you need to upgrade as soon as possible.

Q: **Are security breaches really a threat to my warehouse?**

A: Absolutely—any business can be a target. Plus, many devices are still running on Windows CE—a 20-year-old operating system that's simply not equipped to handle modern-day threats.

Q: **Is the Android operating system secure?**

A: Yes. Android has diligently developed and released security enhancements to safeguard devices against evolving threats, as well as updates to meet regulatory requirements across retail, healthcare and government applications.

Q: **Can I just update the OS or should I upgrade the entire device?**

A: It's best to upgrade the entire device. Not only will you get better features, functionality and battery life, but you won't have to deal with shortages in replacement parts when discontinued devices break. Plus, newer devices have more intuitive user interfaces that can help boost productivity.

Q: **Should I still upgrade if my current devices work just fine?**

A: Yes. Some parts of your old Windows-based devices are no longer being made. So if your provider runs out of stock, they can't reorder more. That means if something goes wrong with the device, you may be forced to retire it unexpectedly, disrupting your operations until you get a replacement.

Q: **Can I avoid re-customizing my apps?**

A: It depends on the application. Our All-Touch Terminal Emulation, powered by Ivanti, can run on your devices in green-screen mode right out of the box. For other apps, migration is inevitable—but the advantages of upgrading likely outweigh any inconvenience.

Q: **Standard Android support only lasts three years, but I plan to keep my devices for much longer. What are my options?**

A: You can extend protection for Zebra Android devices up to 10 years via LifeGuard™ for Android. Available as part of Zebra's OneCare support service, LifeGuard provides regular security updates and legacy OS security support when transitioning to a newer OS.

Looking to move beyond yesterday's devices and seize more opportunities? The solution's in black and white. **Visit our website** to learn more about Android-based mobile computing devices from Zebra.

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