

Red Hat's Announcement & The CERN IT Linux Strategy

Arne Wiebalck

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A Situation Recap



→ Red Hat announced[↗] they stopped publishing RHEL sources (June 21, 2023)

- RHEL 8 & RHEL 9 affected, no changes for RHEL7 / CentOS7
- De-branded RHEL SRPMs were published on git.centos.org[↗]
- Basis for RHEL clone rebuilds such as AlmaLinux and Rocky Linux
- Sources now only available to RHEL subscribers

→ This move directly targets the clone rebuilds[↗]

- Red Hat “not under any obligation to make things easier for rebuilders”
- No perceived value (e.g. different arch or compiler flags)
- No contribution upstream (e.g. to CentOS Stream)

→ Sound from a corporate perspective*, unfortunate for rebuild deployments

*To be fair: Red Hat contributed and contributes a lot to open source projects.



The Impact on Rebuilds and Deployments



- No SRPMs → Building “a bug-compatible” clone is more difficult
- The rebuilds took different routes to handle this for now
 - Rocky Linux seems to mostly ignore the message (continues with RHEL SRPMs)
 - Oracle also takes a more confrontational course (may deviate from RHEL)
 - AlmaLinux complies with the changes (works with the CentOS Stream sources)
- Routes either legally risky or work-intensive ... neither is sustainable
- For AlmaLinux, the additional complexity will affect the rebuild time
 - The delayed release of a kernel RPM to fix CVE-2023-32233 is an example
- Uncertainty and RHEL / rebuild interdependence create risks for deployments



The Impact on CERN IT Users and Services



- **CERN has a RHEL Academic Site License until 2029**
 - “Extended Research Network” ([GDB Jan 2023](#)[↗])

- **CERN IT Linux team supports RHEL and AlmaLinux**
 - Leverage the site license, but provide support/help for WLCG community
 - Have one as the exit strategy of the other

- **CERN IT services can use either**
 - ... and many do (a combination)



A Path Forward for CERN IT and WLCG



- **Still in the “neutral zone”, closely following the evolution**
 - SUSE just announced to fork publicly available RHEL ↗ and fund it w/ 10M\$
 - Will there be timely updates and releases?
 - What is the model how these are provided?
 - CERN IT Linux team is in touch with AlmaLinux upstream

- **Too early to revise our RHEL / AlmaLinux offering**
 - Clearly, we need clarity at some point ... and likely a Plan B
 - Next minor release of RHEL (autumn)?

- **CERN IT committed to work with the WLCG community**



Thanks!