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Free ESXi Updates: Can You Go 8.0U3e to 8.0U3h?

A plain checklist for whether you are entitled to the patch, based on what the community discussion settled on.

Updated **2026-10-29** · Full guide: www.mrplanb.com/blog/free-isn-t-free-anymore-the-brutal-reality-of-updating-esxi-8-0u3e-to-8-0u3h-without-paying-a-ce

> Access equals license. If 8.0U3h appears in your Broadcom portal under your entitlement, you can update. If it does not, you are not entitled to download or apply it. Free ESXi is a snapshot of the version you downloaded, not a rolling right to future patches.

8.0U3e
the version the free download entitles you to

April 2025
when hostupdate.vmware.com was shut down

3
things free ESXi lacks: vCenter, VADP backups, storage API

4
grounded answers on legal updating

The short answer

- If 8.0U3h is in your Broadcom account portal under your entitlement, yes, you can update.
- If it is not available through official channels tied to your account, you are not entitled to download or apply it.
- Free ESXi does not grant blanket access to future patch levels.
- Critical security patches may be treated differently in specific policy contexts, but that does not automatically apply to every update.

Check your entitlement

- [ ] Log into the Broadcom portal and look for 8.0U3h in your downloads.
- [ ] If it is not listed, treat that as your answer.
- [ ] Do not rely on a public update depot: hostupdate.vmware.com was shut down in April 2025.
- [ ] Remember that the update command working is not the same as being entitled.
- [ ] If there is no critical CVE forcing your hand, consider staying on 8.0U3e.

Works technically vs allowed

Question	Answer
Does `esxcli software profile update` still run?	Yes, the hypervisor does not phone home mid-upgrade
Will it update with valid depot files?	Yes, if you have the right files and checksums
Does that make it compliant?	No: functionality is not entitlement
Was patching beyond SnS ever allowed?	Not under the VMware EULA, even before Broadcom
What decides it?	Whether your account can download it

What free ESXi never included

No vCenter
Free ESXi has no vCenter management.

No VADP backups
VADP is a licensed feature, so free ESXi with Veeam means agent-based backups only.

No storage API access
Restricted by design, and always has been.

A snapshot in time
You get the version you download and run it as-is.

What homelabbers have to accept

- Continuous updates need a subscription.
- Full API access and modern backup integration need a license.
- Zero ambiguity about what is allowed needs entitlement visibility in your account portal.
- Free editions are marketing funnels, not long-term entitlement programs.
- If you cannot see it in your portal, do not touch it.

Sources and notes: Community discussion on updating free ESXi (summarized on the page) · Broadcom support portal entitlement rules as described on the page