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vSphere License Expiry: What Happens and What to Do

What stops, what keeps running, and the five steps to take before a Broadcom subscription clock hits zero.

Updated **2026-10-29** · Full guide: www.mrplanb.com/blog/vmware-vsphere-license-expired-now-what

> When a vSphere subscription expires, running VMs keep running, but you lose the ability to power on stopped VMs, vCenter loses full management, hosts disconnect, snapshots fail and backups are likely to fail. There is no official grace period, and applying a new license restores things quickly. The community advice is to audit, renew early, test backups, keep a paper trail and plan an exit option.

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official grace period after the end date

10 days
response window some admins were given in compliance letters

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preparation steps before renewal

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running VMs powered off automatically at expiry

What happens at expiry

Area	Result
Running VMs	Keep running unless the host or VM goes down
Stopped or rebooted VMs	Cannot be powered on, so a reboot is game over
vCenter	Loses full management capabilities
Hosts	Drop into a disconnected state
Snapshots and backups	Snapshots fail, backups and replication may fail, no VADP or VAIO
After applying a new license	Things come back quickly, but the gap is fragile

Before the clock runs out

- [ ] Audit your environment so you know which hosts and VMs are at risk.
- [ ] Start the renewal early. Bureaucratic delays can leave you exposed even if you are technically renewed.
- [ ] Back up your environment and test those backups.
- [ ] Document your licenses and communications for a clean paper trail.
- [ ] Explore alternatives and keep a contingency plan.

Licensing and compliance reality

- Multiple admins reported letters from Connor Consulting, the firm Broadcom uses for license compliance audits.
- One admin got a letter despite never being on subscription licenses.
- Some were told to respond within 10 days or risk further action.

- There is no official grace period. Any warning in practice depends on how time zones and expiry windows are read.
- Old license keys are gone, replaced by license files and Operations Manager integrations, cloud-connected or air-gapped.

Shift in model

Hard stops
Insiders say Broadcom is moving away from the Oracle-style audit model toward cutting functionality at lapse.

Same as SaaS
Salesforce, Meraki and Microsoft already work this way, per the page.

Trade-off
Retroactive audits go away, but service is cut the second you miss a renewal.

Portal trust
Admins report login issues and download portals that barely function.

What teams are doing

- Renewing, or looking for exit strategies.
- Moving away from vSAN because renewal costs have gone way up.
- One admin broke a cluster to run a site standalone and avoid renewal.
- Nutanix comes up as an alternative, but more than one admin reported Nutanix renewals ended up more expensive than VMware's.

Sources and notes: VMware by Broadcom official site · r/vmware community · VMware Communities forum