

Novell's Minimum Patch List

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You have probably heard the adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." This adage not only applies to your health but it also applies to the health of your company's servers. You can prevent potential problems by ensuring that servers are running the latest patches and updates for the Novell products your company is using. To help you keep up with the available patches and updates, Novell offers a minimum patch list, which you can access through Novell's Support Connection web site (<http://support.novell.com/misc/patlst.htm>).

WHAT IS IT?

Novell's minimum patch list includes the latest patches and updates that Novell recommends for each Novell product, including various versions of NetWare, GroupWise, ManageWise, and BorderManager. According to Novell, the patches and updates in the minimum patch list are necessary to maintain the functionality of Novell products.

These patches and updates are also necessary to receive continued technical support from Novell. In fact, if you call Novell Technical Services to resolve a problem that you are experiencing with a server, the support technician will begin by asking whether you have applied the current set of minimum patches and updates. If you have not yet applied them, the support technician will recommend that you do so. He or she will then tell you to call back if these patches and updates do not resolve the problem. (For more information about the steps you should take before calling Novell Technical Services, visit <http://support.novell.com/feature/before-call.htm>.)

WHY DO YOU NEED IT?

You should visit Novell's minimum patch list regularly to ensure that you have the latest patches and updates. You then need to download and apply the current set of minimum patches and updates for every Novell product your company is using. Whenever anyone asks me which patches and updates they need from Novell's minimum patch list, I answer, "All of them and more."

Novell would not have released a patch for a particular product unless there was a good reason for that patch. In this way, the minimum patch list is similar to a recall notice that you may receive from a car manufacturer. If the car manufacturer finds a defective part in the model of car you are driving, you are notified of the problem by mail, and you are invited to have the part replaced at no charge. Although the probability is slight that the part is defective in your car, you should have the part replaced to be on the safe side.

Of course, having a defective part replaced is the least you should do to maintain your car. To improve your car's reliability

and performance, your mechanic might recommend that you use premium-grade gasoline, have the tires aligned, and install new shock absorbers. If you choose not to bother with these recommendations, your car will not stop running. But you may forgo improved reliability and performance.

The same rule applies to Novell products. In addition to the patches and updates on Novell's minimum patch list, Novell often releases patches and updates that are designed to improve reliability and performance. You should apply all of the patches and updates that are available for the Novell products your company is using, even if some of these patches and updates are not required to maintain functionality.

IS THAT ALL?

Novell's minimum patch list also includes links to other areas on Novell's web site that offer patches and updates. For example, you might want to check out the Consolidated Support Pack page (<http://support.novell.com/csp/csplist.htm>). The first version of the Consolidated Support Pack contains the latest patches and updates for NetWare 5, NetWare 4, and ManageWise 2.6. Future versions of the Consolidated Support Pack will contain patches and updates for these and other Novell products, enabling you to download and apply patches and updates for multiple Novell products simultaneously.

In addition, Novell's minimum patch list includes a link to Novell's download page (<http://www.novell.com/download>). From this page, you can download free add-on products, such as Novell client software and GroupWise gateways. In addition, you can download free upgrades and evaluation copies of several Novell products, such as NDS for NT, Novell Replication Services, and Novell StandbyServer for NetWare.

Finally, Novell's minimum patch list includes a link to Novell's File Finder (http://support.novell.com/search/ff_index.htm). You can use File Finder to view all of the patches and updates that are available for a particular Novell product.

CONCLUSION

Novell's minimum patch list simplifies the process of tracking down the latest patches and updates for Novell products. With everything you need at your fingertips, why risk the health of your company's servers by neglecting to download and apply these patches and updates? Not only can you avoid potential problems that might affect functionality, but you can also make your job easier by improving reliability and performance.

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