Oracle Utilities Cloud Services

Update Policy Guide

For 22B Releases

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Oracle Utilities Cloud Services 22B Update Policy Guide

Contents

Chapter 1

Cloud Services Update Policy Guide

Welcome to the Oracle Utilities Cloud Services Update Policy Guide. This document describes update policies and practices that apply to all customers of the following Oracle Utilities Cloud Services:

- Oracle Utilities Billing Cloud Service
- Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing Cloud Service
- Oracle Utilities Customer Cloud Service
- Oracle Utilities Generation Asset Manager Cloud Service
- Oracle Utilities Meter Solution Cloud Service
- Oracle Utilities Operational Device Cloud Service
- Oracle Utilities Rate Cloud Service
- Oracle Utilities Work and Asset Cloud Service

This document includes the following:

- Cloud Services Update Policy

Chapter 2

Cloud Services Update Policy

This document describes update policies and practices that apply to all customers of any of the cloud services documented in the *Oracle Utilities Cloud Services Service Descriptions and Metrics* document. Note that the *Oracle Global Business Unit Cloud Services - Pillar Document* outlines the applicable Change Management Policy and the obligation to stay current, and this paper provides the applicable details and obligations.

This chapter includes the following:

- Overview
- The Oracle Utilities Cloud Model
- Prior to Go Live
- Go Live Release and Maintenance Packs
- Once You Go Live
- Software and Hardware Update Types
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Overview

Oracle Utilities periodically provides software and hardware releases for your Oracle Utilities cloud environments to:

- Introduce new features/functions
- Address reported issues
- Provide infrastructure and security updates

Staying current with your service involves managing and planning for these releases and updates.

The Oracle Utilities Cloud Model

The Oracle Utilities Cloud Model offers mission critical enterprise systems as "Software-as-a-Service" (SaaS) services and has been designed to meet the special needs of utilities to minimize customization, maximize production stability, and retain the benefits of using fully updated software in a SaaS implementation.

New General Availability (GA) software releases are provided three times a year (in other words, every four months) to introduce new features and functions. The significant features are designed to be 'opt-in', and we encourage every customer to make use of these features to reduce customizations. Implementing customers will be updated to each new General Availability release promptly until go-live is near, while live customers should plan to take each release after the initial round of mandatory updates.

For each General Availability release, Maintenance Packs (MPs) are provided each month for the first eight months that includes the General Availability release month. For the first four months after a General Availability release, Maintenance Packs are mandatory and we do not allow any live production environments to update to the release during this period. For the next three maintenance pack months, we limit patches to enable go-lives and production upgrades, and customers must not fall further than three months behind to ensure quality of service. In the last three months of support for a release, application patching is optional while platform updates continue monthly until version end of life; in other words, there are no planned monthly updates though a mandatory emergency patch is possible. All customers must plan to update to the next GA release prior to the end of life date as published on the Oracle Utilities Release Calendar.

Oracle does not allow customers to remain on an unsupported (non-GA) release that is past the end of life date published in the Oracle Utilities Release Calendar. If you do not upgrade prior to the published end of life date, Oracle may force-upgrade any unsupported environments (including Production). You will be notified of upcoming release end of life dates and will also receive advance notification of any potential force-upgrades that need to occur.

Summary: Getting to the Production Lane
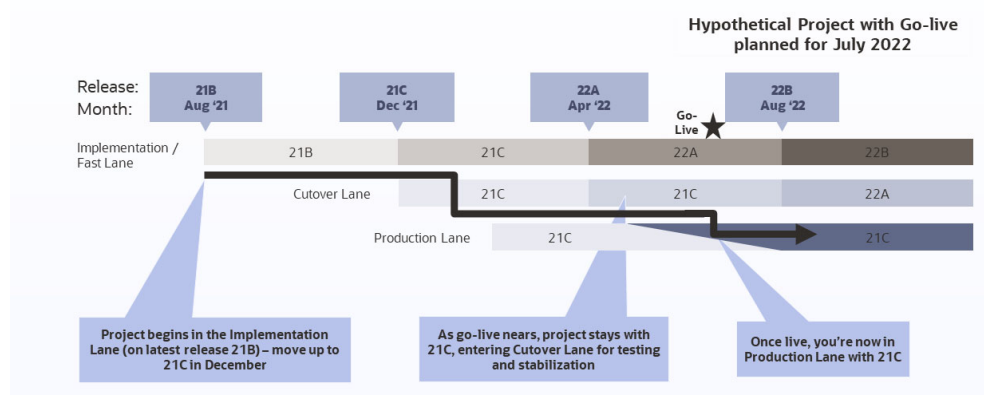
The above illustration is a diagram of the Implementation/Fast, Cutover, and Production lanes The yellow arrow indicate the path of a hypothetical project through implementation to production.

The next sections describe in more detail the policies Oracle Utilities has adopted to support both implementing customers and live customers.

Prior to Go Live

In the early stages of the implementation, also called the Fast Lane, Oracle will keep the environments on the latest release level, and uptake of monthly maintenance packs is required. One or more 'early adopter' environments will be updated on the first weekend of each month, and the other environments including the Prodution environment will be

updated on the third weekend of the month. This pattern is maintained until go-live is less than four months away.

The benefits of keeping your environments at the latest release level during your implementation are:

- Access to the latest features and functions of the service, typically meaning less need for customization.

- Having all available patches applied means discovering fewer problems and makes it easier for customer support to replicate any issues you do experience.

When your go-live date is on the horizon (no more than four months away), you will move into the Cutover Lane by staying at your current release level, and if desired choosing a 'freeze' Maintenance Pack level to fully stabilize prior to go live. We support a freeze of no more than three months, so the 'freeze version' can only be set once you are less than two months from your go-live date (thus allowing for a month of post-go-live stabilization). Note that if your go-live date shifts, part of the re-planning may need to involve moving up to the next General Availability release level.

Go Live Release and Maintenance Packs

As go-live approaches, you can stay on your current General Availability release that hasn't reached end of life and maintenance packs that meet the following requirements:

- The maintenance pack number is 6 or greater.

- The end of life date of the release is more than 2 months from the cutover weekend.

- The maintenance pack number you go live with has been available for less than 3 calendar months.

Once You Go Live

Once your business is live with an Oracle Utilities Cloud Service, hot fixes will be available for the most recent Maintenance Pack. This is to support stabilization period which is the first month after go-live.

After that you will need to take up the next General Availability release level on average every four months, with exact timing determined by you within our Production Lane guidelines. You can take the next General Availability release into one or more non-production environments first for testing, which should focus on any customized areas of your system. At this point the General Availability release will already be out of the Fast Lane, so the fixes are limited to critical/blocking issues faced by you or other customers getting ready for production use. If upgrade testing on the next General Availability release needs to continue for an extended period you can choose a 'freeze level' for stabilization, then will need to take a mandatory 'catch up' to the last maintenance pack of the release (at the eight month after General Availability). This is similar to the initial go-live and gives you the ability to test the release as needed and stay current in your production environment.

Note: Deadlines for upgrading to each General Availability release are provided on the Oracle Utilities Release Schedule.

Software and Hardware Update Types

We provide the following software and hardware updates:

- General Availability Releases (3x per year)
- Maintenance Packs (monthly / 8 Maintenance Packs per release)
- Platform Updates (monthly)
- Hot Fix Updates (as needed)
- Infrastructure Patching (quarterly)

You will receive separate notifications with timing details prior to the maintenance.

General Availability Releases

There are three feature/function General Availability releases each calendar year, and each General Availability release is supported for 12 months. Once in production, you will have a certain amount of flexibility to schedule the General Availability release first for testing, then for production. Note that you will always need to take the next General Availability release prior to the end of life of your current production release.

Note: General Availability Releases are mandatory. You cannot skip a General Availability release.

General Availability Releases may include:

- New and enhanced features/functions (generally provided as 'opt-in')
- New and Updated language packs
- Fixes for reported issues with Oracle Utilities Cloud Applications
- Fixes and updates of the other bundled services which are part of the cloud subscription, such as the Utilities Testing Accelerator.

Mandatory or Optional	Mandatory for Fast Lane Customers Optional for Cutover / Production Lane Customers
Delivery Schedule	General Availability releases are delivered three times per year. Please refer to the Oracle Utilities Release Calendar for details.

Environment Update Plan	During implementation / Customers on fast lane, General Availability releases are scheduled promptly at General Availability, first to non-production environments, then to production.
	As go-live approaches, you can stay on your current General Availability release to stabilize for final acceptance as long as you are on the fifth through eighth maintenance pack (see Monthly Maintenance Packs for more information about maintenance packs).
	Once in Production after go-live, we recommend scheduling uptake of the next General Availability release for testing between the fifth & eighth maintenance packs. This will give you time to perform quick regression before uptake to production (see Monthly Maintenance Packs for more information about maintenance packs).
	Non-production early adopters (remaining non-production environments): First Maintenance window (typically first Saturday) of the month.
	Production environment and late adopters: Second Maintenance window (typically third Saturday) of the month or next maintenance window.
Planned Outage Times	Outage times are according to the Planned Maintenance Times section.
Readiness Material and Documentation	You will receive advance notice of Readiness material, which describe the new features/functions in upcoming releases. This material is published on the Oracle Cloud Readiness site at least 30 days prior to update availability. This Readiness material along with the documentation will help you prepare for the features/functions introduced with each new release.

Note: When a new General Availability release level is introduced into a test environment, it is not possible to refresh that environment from Production until Production has also been updated. Many customers schedule a refresh of the test environment just prior to taking the next General Availability release.

Monthly Maintenance Packs

Monthly Maintenance Packs (MP) contain fixes for reported application issues and are provided for the first eight months including the General Availability release (remember that releases are supported for 12 months). For the first five months of the release, maintenance packs contain roll-ups of all available fixes for Fast Lane customers. After that point for the next three months the maintenance packs on a release will include only fixes for critical/blocking issues faced by customers either live or soon going live.

Monthly maintenance packs are mandatory while in the Fast Lane (when your cloud service is not yet in live production). This means that there is only support for hot fixes on the latest maintenance pack during the first five months of a General Availability release.

When go-live is approaching, you have the option to choose a monthly maintenance pack level at which to 'freeze' and stabilize for final acceptance. The freeze can last up to three months, then there will be a mandatory 'catch-up' after go-live to the latest monthly pack. The first allowable freeze level is the fifth maintenance pack for the release, and the last possible is the eighth maintenance pack.

After going live, we require you to move up to the final (eighth month) maintenance pack for your current release and from that point forward only hot fix updates will be provided to minimize change in the live system.

The fixes provided in each monthly maintenance pack are documented in My Oracle Support.

Mandatory or Optional	Mandatory while in Fast Lane. Optional to temporarily freeze on a maintenance pack for go-live (up to three months), followed by mandatory 'catch up'
Delivery Schedule	Maintenance Packs are prepared for the first weekend of each calendar month (with rare exceptions for holidays).
Environment Update Plan	Non-production early adopter environments: First Maintenance window (typically first Saturday) of the month or subsequent maintenance windows. Production environment and late adopters: Second maintenance window (typically third Saturday) of the month or subsequent maintenance windows.
Planned Outage Times	Outage times are according to the Planned Maintenance Times section.
Readiness Material and Documentation	Documentation for the included fixes can be found in My Oracle Support. (Doc ID 2616460.1).

Platform Updates

The Oracle Utilities cloud services utilize a Kubernetes-based microservice architecture, and this platform provides services such as networking, monitoring, logging, etc. On a monthly basis we will provide platform updates, which do not in themselves alter the functionality of the service. These platform updates are installed at the same time as the maintenance packs and are also applied in months when no new maintenance pack is provided.

Mandatory or Optional	Mandatory
Delivery Schedule	First weekend of each month regardless if accepting application patching to the environments.
Environment Update Plan	All Non-production environments: First weekend of the month. Production environments: Third weekend of the month (may adjust in certain months due to holidays).
Planned Outage Times	Outage times are according to the Planned Maintenance Times section.

Readiness Material and Documentation	N/A

Hot Fix Updates

You may need a Hot Fix Update when you encounter an unexpected issue that disables a business-critical process and no workaround exists. You must raise the hot fix request through the Service Request (SR) you opened when you initially reported the problem. We approve hot fix requests on a case-by-case basis.

Several criteria must be met to request and receive a hot fix Update, including:

- A resolution is available

- No workaround exists, or you believe that a proposed workaround is not acceptable

- You submitted an update to the existing SR explaining how the reported problem severely impacts a key business process.

- You are on a maintenance pack that is eligible for a hot fix, as described in Monthly Maintenance Packs (otherwise the patch will be made available to you as part of a new maintenance pack).

If you're approved to receive a hot fix update, Oracle Support will explain the type of update you will receive and the timing for applying it. Hot fix updates are cumulative in nature, thus may contain multiple fixes. Hot fix releases are always applied to a selected non-production environment first for validation, then to production.

Mandatory or Optional	Functional fixes are Optional.
	Exception: Oracle declares a patch is critical and mandatory.
Delivery Schedule	Hot fixe updates are delivered after approval, coding and testing.
Environment Update Plan	For all environments, the next available hot fix window after agreed upon with customer success manager (CSM).
	Note: Hot fixes will always be applied to non-prod environment first and after validation., applied in the Production environment.
Planned Outage Times	Outage times are either as outlined in the Planned Maintenance Times section or as negotiated depending on the criticality.
Readiness Material and Documentation	Documentation for the included fixes can be found in My Oracle Support (Doc ID 2616460.1).

All hot fix updates are rolled up and included in the next monthly maintenance pack.

Infrastructure Quarterly Patching

Oracle provides hardware, database, network, and operating system updates periodically to keep your environments optimized and secure. Infrastructure quarterly patching does not typically involve any downtime.

Mandatory or Optional	Mandatory
Delivery Schedule	Quarterly or as needed. Cloud Operationss will communicate the specific dates for each quarter prior to patching.
Planned Outage Times	Downtime is not planned for infrastructure patching.
Readiness Material and Documentation	N/A

Note: Infrastructure patching can create 'blackout periods' during which some environmental activities such as refresh or new environment provisioning cannot occur. Oracle will advise on dates of these periods.

Planned Maintenance Times

Planned Outage Schedule

Outage times are defined to minimize disruption to your business. We willl send you advance notification with outage details, including impacted environment and outage start and end dates.

The standard outage windows start on Saturday evenings at 9pm data center time. Additional planned windows are for hot fix releases Thursday nights starting 11:59pm data center time (2nd, 4th and 5th Thursdays).

Exceptions to Update Practices

We will make every attempt to limit update-related outages and exceptions to the update schedule defined in this document.

However, there may be an occasional need to vary from this schedule for various reasons, such as:

- Unscheduled, emergency updates to address a critical problem affecting all customers
- Extending a planned outage time for an update
- Specially negotiated outage windows based on customer-specific business requirements

We will make every attempt to forecast these special cases and provide you with advance notifications.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

On Updates

During Implementation can I skip a Maintenance Pack?
No. We need to ensure all customers have the latest critical code updates and features/functions. Therefore, during implementation all maintenance packs are mandatory. Without these critical fixes, the stability of your cloud environment can be affected. You can 'freeze' on a particular maintenance pack in the lead-up to go-live, but will need to catch up afterwards.

Can I combine multiple General Availability Releases into a single maintenance window?
No. We manage the monthly maintenance packs for each General Availability release to support both implementing customers and live production customers. While implementing, you will be kept on the latest General Availability release and latest maintenance pack so you can make use of all available features, while Production customers will be using the mature releases which have very low rate of change to ensure stability.

Why do the non-production and production environments get Release Updates and Monthly Maintenance Packs two weeks apart?
This gives you time to perform testing in non-production before changes are introduced to your production environment.

Can I stay on a non-GA (unsupported or past end-of-life) release version?
We do not allow customers to remain on an unsupported (non-GA) release that is past the end of life date published in the Oracle Utilities Release Calendar. If you do not upgrade prior to the published end of life date, Oracle may force-upgrade any unsupported environments (including Production). You will be notified of upcoming release end of life dates and will also receive advance notification of any potential force-upgrades that need to occur.

How do I know what release version I'm on?
The Maintenance notification tells you what version is being delivered. You can also find the Version number on the **About Window** found within each environment.

How do I know what is included in the General Availability release to create a testing plan?
Review the following content:

- What's New documents included in Release Readiness content for each service under **Industry Applications**, **Utilities** (https://www.oracle.com/readiness)

Can I access new features in the latest General Availability Release?
No. We deliver most new features turned off by default. You need to 'opt-in' to turn new features on. See the Release Readiness content for more information (https://www.oracle.com/readiness). Please note that we recommend a 'technical upgrade' approach, which involves updating the production environment to the next General Availability release without turning on new features, then in a second phase configuring and opting-in to new features as desired.

Can I request a specific downtime for when updates are applied?
No. We schedule predefined downtime windows for all updates, as it's critical to time updates when the Oracle Cloud Applications Operations team is available in your region and when most business operations are minimal. You can find additional details in the Planned Outages section in this paper.

What do I do if an update does not address my reported issue?
Update the specific Service Request (SR) in My Oracle Support, indicating that the issue was not resolved after the application of the update. Provide details of any changes in error messages or symptoms and screen shots as appropriate.

Does the update outage schedule still apply if we have more than one Cloud Service (for example, Customer Cloud Service and Work and Asset Cloud Service)?
Yes. You will receive updates for all Oracle Utilities Cloud Services at the same time.

On Environment Refresh

How do Updates affect a request for an Environment Refresh?
An Environment Refresh can only be performed when both source and target environments are at the same version level. Note that monthly maintenance packs will set selected non-production environments to a different level from other environments between the first and third weekends of each month.

If you receive a hot fix update, your non-production test environment will typically be at a different version from your production environment and an Environment Refresh cannot be performed. Oracle will identify the impact of hot fix Updates on a scheduled Environment Refresh. We will not apply hot fix updates to synchronize environments for an Environment Refresh.

When can I schedule an Environment Refresh?
The Environment Refresh for an environment needs to be scheduled for a time period where both source and target environments are at the same version level. Also, it should not be scheduled within a blackout period (e.g. during Infrastructure Quarterly Patching). Please reference the *Oracle Utilities Cloud Services Cloud Operations Guide* for more details on Refresh.

How will I know that my environments are at the same levels for an Environment Refresh?
You can check the version levels of the environments using the About Window. After you submit an Environment Refresh request, we will verify that your environments are at the same update level and can receive an Environment Refresh on the date you request. If necessary, Oracle will identify the date on which your environments could be updated to the same level so that you can reschedule your Environment Refresh.

How will I know if this Oracle Utilities update process changes?
This guide will be updated as changes occur and the changes will be communicated via Oracle Support.