

By ~~Debra~~ ~~Arise~~ ~~02/07~~, Technology News Editor

[Complete Overview of Windows XP Service Pack 3](#)

Courtesy of Microsoft

Microsoft is on the verge of making available the third and final service pack for Windows XP. Long overdue following numerous updates, Windows XP SP3 will hit by mid 2008. This much is certain, as the Redmond company has debuted the testing for the operating system's service pack all the way back in July 2007. A near final Release Candidate build of XP SP3 is currently available to MSDN and TechNet subscribers with a public version looming on the horizon. In this context, Microsoft published an [official overview of XP SP3](#). "Windows XP Service Pack 3 (SP3) includes all previously released Windows XP updates, including security updates and hotfixes. It also includes select out-of-band releases, and a small number of new enhancements, which do not significantly change customers' experience with the operating system. Windows XP SP3 provides a new baseline for customers still deploying Windows XP. For customers with existing Windows XP installations, Windows XP SP3 fills gaps in the updates they might have missed—for example, by declining individual updates when using Windows Update," Microsoft informed. One thing that Microsoft was crystal clear on was the fact that XP SP3 would, by no means, be a repeat of XP SP2. Supporting this perspective are illustrative examples, such as the fact that XP SP3 will not even include Internet Explorer 7, while at the same time the service pack will deliver additional functionality such as the MMC 3.0 framework, MSXML6, Microsoft Windows Installer 3.1 v2 (3.1.4000.2435), Background Intelligent Transfer Service (BITS) 2.5, IPsec Simple Policy Update for Windows Server 2003 and Windows XP, Digital Identity Management Service (DIMS), Peer Name Resolution Protocol (PNRP) 2.1 and Wi-Fi Protected Access 2 (WPA2). At the same time, Microsoft will backport certain features, functionality and capabilities from Windows Vista, but not enough so that there will be an equivalence between the two operating systems. XP SP3 will include by default "Black Hole" Router Detection, being able to identify routers silently discarding packets. Straight from Vista, XP SP3 will come with the Network Access Protection (NAP) platform. Microsoft will also overhaul the Security Options control panel in XP SP3 with the integration of Descriptive Security Options User Interface. The activation infrastructure of the operating system will be revamped making it more like Vista's, and XP SP3 will also feature enhanced security for Administrator and Service policy entries and the Microsoft Kernel Mode Cryptographic Module.