

## Windows Server 2008 RC1 available for download

Microsoft is putting the finishing touches on Windows Server 2008 and on Wednesday made a near-final release of the server operating system widely available as an Internet download.

Microsoft said Windows Server 2008 RC1 (Release Candidate 1) is now available to all users, either as a 30 day trial that does not require a product activation key, or as a six-month trial for which users must register.

Microsoft said it plans to formally launch a final version of Windows Server 2008 on February 27th at a high profile event in Los Angeles. The event, which the company is calling 'Heroes Happen Here,' will also be used to unveil Microsoft SQL Server 2008 and Microsoft Visual Studio 2008.

A number of major hardware vendors and chipmakers, including Dell, HP, Intel, and AMD, are expected to participate.

Server operating systems reside on a server and play the role of traffic cop on a computer network -- routing internal communications and Web traffic and serving up applications and related utilities.

Windows Server 2008 offers a number of significant enhancements over its most recent predecessor, Windows Server 2003.

Among the software's more highly anticipated features are Windows PowerShell, a command line shell with more than 130 management tools and an integrated scripting language, and Internet Information Services 7.0, a built-in Web server that brings together numerous online publishing technologies.

Windows Server 2008 also includes a number of features first seen in Windows Vista, Microsoft's latest desktop operating system. Windows Vista has been available since January.

To date, more than 1.8 million users have put earlier trial versions of Windows Server 2008 through its paces. RC1 will provide one of the final opportunities for users to weigh in on the OS before it's released to manufacturing, Microsoft said.