ROCKET.CHAT · GUIDE · SKYPE FOR BUSINESS REPLACEMENT

Replacing Skype for Business Server.

Support for Skype for Business Server 2015 and 2019 ended in October 2025, and Microsoft's paid security updates ended a year later. Microsoft's paths forward lead to a subscription edition or to its cloud. This guide shows how to choose a replacement you control, that reaches the partners you work with, and that you won't have to replace again.

THE REPLACEMENT TEST

Where does it run? | **Who can access it?** | **Who can you reach?** | **Can you stay in control?**

FOR ORGANIZATIONS RUNNING SKYPE FOR BUSINESS SERVER · NOV 2026

SKYPE FOR BUSINESS SERVER

- JUL 2015 — **Server 2015** released
- OCT 2018 — **Server 2019** released
- JAN 2024 — **Mainstream support** ends for 2019
- JUL 2025 — **Subscription Edition** released
- OCT 2025 — **Support ends** for 2015 and 2019
- OCT 2026 — **Paid security updates end** no further extensions
- TODAY — **Your decision** what replaces it

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

What this guide covers.

Unsupported is the default now.

Skype for Business Server 2015 and 2019 no longer get security updates, paid or free.

Microsoft's paths keep you dependent.

Subscription Edition ties you to Microsoft's lifecycle. Teams moves you to Microsoft's cloud.

A replacement has to reach partners.

If it can't connect to the systems your partners run, people will find a tool that can.

Migrate once.

A platform you run yourself, on open standards, means this decision doesn't come back in three years.

CHAPTERS

01	Where Skype for Business Server stands	p. 03
02	Three ways forward	p. 04
03	More than a server swap	p. 05
04	What to require from a replacement	p. 06
05	Compare your options	p. 07
06	Interoperable by design. Governed by you.	p. 08
07	A migration plan that holds	p. 10

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CHAPTER 01

Where Skype for Business Server stands.

For more than a decade, Skype for Business Server has carried chat, presence, calls and meetings for organizations that keep their communications on their own infrastructure. That era has closed.

Extended support for Skype for Business Server 2015 and 2019 ended in October 2025. Microsoft then sold security updates for one more year through a paid program, and the last period ended in October 2026 with no further extensions. Microsoft no longer ships security updates, fixes or technical help for either version. Microsoft won't fix vulnerabilities found from now on.

That is not a theoretical risk. Communications servers sit at the edge of the network, carry sensitive conversations and connect to your identity systems. An unpatched one is a target for attackers and a likely finding in any security audit.

VERSION	RELEASED	MAINSTREAM SUPPORT	EXTENDED SUPPORT
Server 2015	Jul 2015	Ended Oct 2020	**Ended Oct 2025**
Server 2019	Oct 2018	Ended Jan 2024	**Ended Oct 2025**
Subscription Edition	Jul 2025	Modern Lifecycle Policy: no fixed end date. Support can end with 12 months' notice.	

Microsoft's paid Extended Security Update program for 2015 and 2019 ran from October 2025 to October 2026. Sources: Microsoft Lifecycle documentation; Microsoft Tech Community.

Running it today means running it without a safety net.

CHAPTER 02

Three ways forward.

Skype for Business Server customers have three ways to go. Two of them are Microsoft's: Subscription Edition and Teams. Each one deals with the support problem in a different way, and each has a cost that shows up later.

PATH 1

Stay where you are.

Unsupported.

The servers keep running, but Microsoft's paid security updates ended in October 2026 and won't be extended. The risk grows every month, and so does the gap with your security and compliance obligations.

PATH 2

Upgrade to Subscription Edition.

Supported, on Microsoft's terms.

Released in July 2025. It has no fixed end date, and support can end with 12 months' notice. It installs only as an in-place upgrade of Server 2019, so 2015 deployments have to move to 2019 first.

PATH 3

Move to Microsoft Teams.

Microsoft's cloud, not yours.

Teams is the path Microsoft recommends for Skype for Business customers. It runs in Microsoft-operated cloud, so you can't host it on your own servers, and most of what it does depends on a connection to that cloud.

Staying put isn't safe. The other two paths leave the next decision in Microsoft's hands.

CHAPTER 03

More than a server swap.

Replacing Skype for Business Server looks like an IT project. In practice it lands in the same window as bigger shifts in how organizations are expected to communicate.

The platform you choose now has to meet all of them, or you will be making this decision again in a few years.

The question isn't what replaces Skype. It's what you won't have to replace again.

Interoperability is expected	CJADC2 in the US, Federated Mission Networking across NATO and the Interoperable Europe Act in the EU all call for systems that were never built to talk to each other to work together. None of them asks partners to adopt one vendor's platform.
Sovereignty comes with it	Organizations want to decide where their communications run and which law applies to them, on their own servers, air-gapped or in a sovereign cloud, without giving up reach.
Zero Trust has deadlines	The US Department of Defense must reach its Zero Trust target level by the end of FY2027, and NIS2 sets access-control duties across Europe. Access has to be checked on every request and hold up under audit.
Shadow IT fills the gaps	When the approved tool can't reach a partner or goes down in a crisis, people move to consumer messengers, with no record keeping, no access control and no audit.

CHAPTER 04 · THE REPLACEMENT TEST

What to require from a replacement.

Four questions decide whether a replacement solves the problem or postpones it. Use them to score every option you look at.

Where does it run?

On infrastructure you choose.

Self-hosted, air-gapped or in a sovereign cloud, with no core capability depending on someone else's cloud.

Who can access it?

Only who your rules allow.

Access checked on every request by role, clearance and project, against your own identity system. End-to-end encryption, and every action auditable.

Who can you reach?

Every partner, whatever they run.

Native federation over open standards such as Matrix and XMPP, with the sender's identity and the audit trail intact. A bridge to Teams for colleagues who still use it.

Can you stay in control?

Open and resilient.

Open source code and open APIs, so you can build what you need without waiting for a vendor. Keeps running through an outage, a cyberattack or a lost connection.

KEEP WHAT WORKS

- Chat and presence
- Voice and video calls
- Meetings and screen sharing
- File sharing
- Integrations with your tools

CHAPTER 05

Compare your options.

	PATH 1 **Stay on Server 2015 or 2019**	PATH 2 **Subscription Edition**	PATH 3 **Microsoft Teams**	ALTERNATIVE **Rocket.Chat**
Security updates	● None. Paid updates ended October 2026	● Yes, under Microsoft's Modern Lifecycle Policy	● Yes, managed by Microsoft	● Yes
Where it runs	● Your servers	● Your servers	● Microsoft's cloud	● Your servers, air-gapped or a sovereign cloud
Support horizon	● Ended	○ No fixed end date; can end with 12 months' notice	○ Set by Microsoft	● Open source code you can inspect, on servers you control
Who operates it	● You	● You	● Microsoft	● You, or a provider you choose
Reach beyond your organization	○ Mainly Microsoft users	○ Mainly Microsoft users	○ Mainly Microsoft users and invited guests	● Native Matrix and XMPP federation, plus a Teams bridge
Works without internet	○ Internally, on your own network	○ Internally, on your own network	● Needs a connection to Microsoft's cloud	● Yes, including degraded and disconnected networks

● Meets the test ○ Partly ● Doesn't meet it

Ratings are Rocket.Chat's assessment against the test in chapter 04. Microsoft dates from Microsoft Lifecycle, Nov 2026.

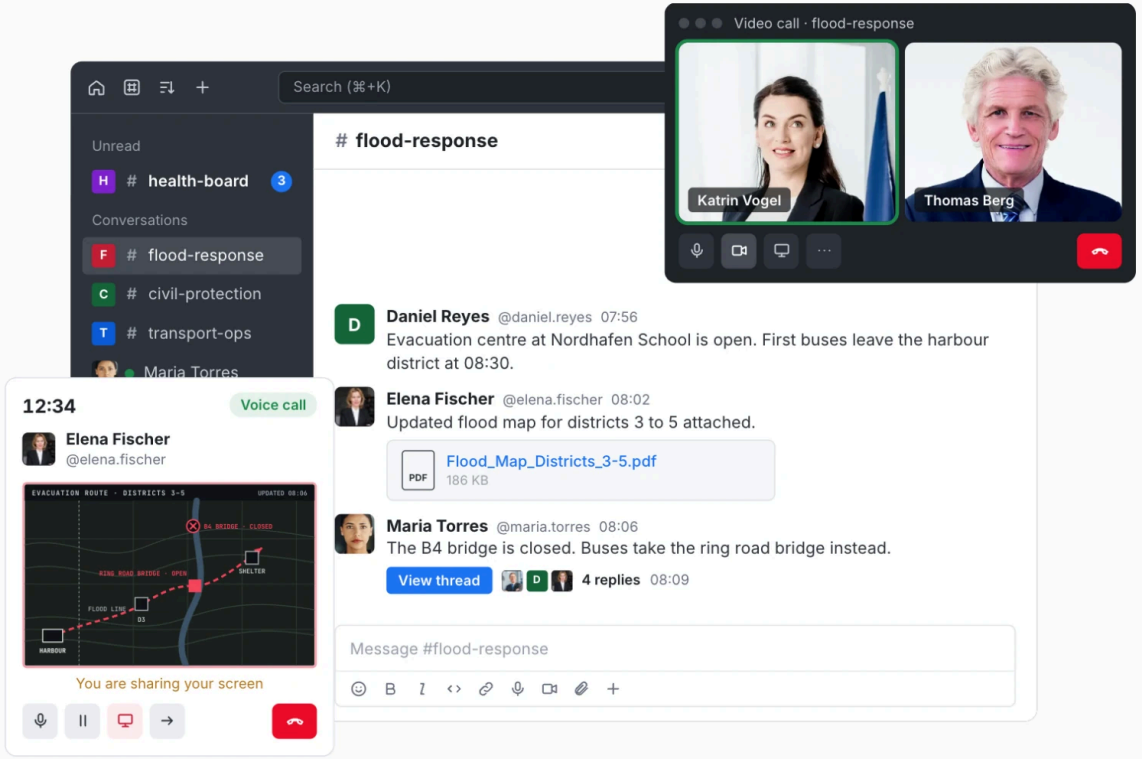
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Interoperable by design. Governed by you.

Rocket.Chat is the collaboration platform for defense and civilian agencies, critical infrastructure operators and enterprises that must work across organizations, borders and partners. Chat, voice, video, file and screen sharing, apps and governed AI agents run in one platform, under one security model, deployed wherever you decide.

The everyday work your teams did in Skype for Business Server, from chat and presence to calls, meetings and file sharing, runs on Rocket.Chat on your own infrastructure. And it reaches partners beyond Microsoft's products, over open standards such as Matrix and XMPP.

Open source | ISO 27001 | SOC 2 Type II | Matrix + XMPP native



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Where does it run?

Deploy anywhere.

Self-hosted, air-gapped or in a sovereign cloud. One platform and one security model from headquarters to the tactical edge.

Who can access it?

Zero Trust, built in.

Attribute-based access control checks every request against your identity provider and your rules. End-to-end and post-quantum encryption protect sensitive work, and every action is auditable.

Who can you reach?

Native federation.

Native Matrix and XMPP federation keeps identity and audit intact across organizations. Where Teams stays, Rocket.Chat bridges it in.

Can you stay in control?

Open and resilient.

Open source code you can inspect, with APIs, SDKs and the Apps Engine to connect your own systems. High availability and secure fallback channels keep you running through a crisis.

YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE

Self-hosted
On your own servers

Air-gapped
Fully disconnected networks

Sovereign cloud
Infrastructure under your jurisdiction

Coexist with Microsoft

If your organization keeps Microsoft 365 for email and documents, Rocket.Chat bridges Teams messages in, so people on both sides keep talking while sensitive work stays governed on infrastructure you control.

Plan your move off Skype for Business.

See Rocket.Chat running the way your organization needs it, on your infrastructure.

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CHAPTER 07

A migration plan that holds.

Leaving Skype for Business Server is a chance to fix more than support. A phased plan keeps people working the whole way through.

STEP 01

Assess

Map users, sites and integrations, and the partners you need to reach. Score your options against the four questions.

STEP 02

Involve

Bring in security, compliance and everyday Skype users early, so requirements are set before the pilot.

STEP 03

Pilot

Run Rocket.Chat with one team and at least one external partner on their own system. Prove federation and access rules with real users.

STEP 04

Roll out

Move in phases, by site or department. Bridge Teams where it stays in use, so no one is cut off during the switch.

STEP 05

Run

Retire Skype for Business Server. Keep improving with training, feedback and new integrations through open APIs.

Pilot with a real partner on their own system. That's where interoperability is proven.

MIGRATE ONCE

Ready to replace Skype for Business for good?

We'll help you plan, test and run Rocket.Chat on your infrastructure, under your rules.

Talk to sales →

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