**VM Decommissioning Process**

The VMWare team is often tasked with the deletion of virtual servers as the guest OS administrators do not have the permission to perform this task in the virtual infrastructure. Because deleting virtual servers as part of the decommissioning process entails deletion of real data, it is critical that we approach this with a great deal of caution and follow change control guidelines. Below are the steps we should follow during the VM decommissioning process:

1. The VMWare team should never delete a decommissioned virtual server without a formal request from a guest OS support team member from the Windows and Linux Delivery and/or Operations teams.
2. The VMWare team should always schedule the VM to be deleted on or after the date specified on the request or work order, but never before unless otherwise instructed by the requester.
3. An approved CHANGE by management and the Change Control Board (CAB) is required for VM deletion during the decommissioning process. Never delete a decommissioned server without an approved change request.
4. Multiple VMs from multiple requests may be scheduled within a single change; however, you should reference all the WOs and/or requests on the change control. Additionally, an entry for each server being decommissioned should be included in the configuration item (CI) list.
5. Because a VM deletion is irreversible, it is important to not in the change that there is no way to back out this change. Note that the only way to recover would be for the guest OS admin to restore from backup if any exists for the VM being deleted.
6. Never delete a decommissioned VM if it still powered on at the time of your change. The guest OS administrators must have powered off the server(s) before the VMWare team completes the final deletion of the VM.
7. If the VM has active snapshots, delete all snapshots before attempting to delete the virtual machine.
8. Make a note of the datastore for the VM being deleted.
9. When deleting the VM for decommissioning purposes, ensure the **Delete from Disk** option is selected to make sure both the inventory object for the VM and the back end files are deleted.
10. After deletion has been completed, browse the hosting datastore to make sure the virtual machine folder and the VM back end files are no longer present. If still present, explore the VM folder and examine its content. In some rare cases, there may be old files in the folder including orphaned VMDKs which can be safely deleted in most cases. Failure to do this final check and clean up could lead to wasted storage space as orphaned files including orphaned VMDKs aren’t deleted as part of the **Delete from Disk** process on step 9 above.