

ERRORMSG: Exception: There is no Unicode byte order mark when running Activation Wizard

When running the Activation Wizard, you may receive the following exception:

Exception: There is no Unicode byte order mark. Cannot switch to Unicode.

The root cause of this is an incorrectly formatted license file being found in the common seek paths.

Background

During an outage in our license activation system in mid 2025, we had to fall back on an emergency license activation process. Early versions of those licenses were being created with a doctype declaration that referenced UTF-16. This was corrected fairly quickly, but a few customers may have received emergency/temp licenses with this misconfiguration. The licenses were/are working fine, but the activation wizard is "falling over" when it sees them.

Fix / Workaround

There are two possible ways to fix the issue

- 1) find and delete any Atalasoft.*.lic files and re run the activation
- 2) Find any Atalasoft.*.lic files and open them in your text editor of choice - look for

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-16"?>
```

change it to

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
```

Save and then try again.

PLEASE DO NOT make any other changes to the file as most of the contents are cryptographically hashed and changes will cause an Invalid License Signature exception

Future Remediation

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We plan to address the issue in the Activation Wizard in a future release so that it will be better able to deal with this specific situation. However all existing copies of the Activation Wizard out in the wild will throw this error if such a file is found, thus the workaround may be your best bet if you're one of the customers who received an emergency license targeting UTF-16

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Atalasoft Knowledge Base

<https://www.atalasoft.com/kb2/KB/50446/ERRORMSG-Exception-There-is-no-Unico...>