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WiFi standard delayed

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The ratification of the next generation WiFi standard has been delayed again, due to 12 000 proposed changes to the first draft of the standard.

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) released draft 1.0 of 802.11n in January for comment. This draft was, however, rejected earlier this week. A second draft was expected in July, but this version is unlikely to be ready until early 2007. This means 802.11n will not be ratified until 2008, says Rolf de Vegt, senior director of business development for Airgo Networks and a member of the IEEE 802.11n working group.

"The new standard, 802.11n, promised end-users faster connection to access points with speeds in excess of 100Mbps, compared to the 54Mbps offered by the current 802.11g standard," says Pierre Holtzhausen, network specialist at Drive Control Corporation.

"I think this proves that draft 1.0 wasn't really mature. The working group should be able to vote on the new draft, with changes in early 2007," says De Vegt.

In SA, suppliers have started marketing pre-n products, based on draft 1.0. "Corporate customers must be prudent when using pre-n products based on the rejected draft 1.0, because it is unlikely these products will be backward compatible when the new standard is ratified," warns Holtzhausen.

D-Link, a supplier of WiFi products, issued a press release in April announcing the availability of the first products based on the draft 802.11n technology, sometime in July.

"We will still continue to sell pre-802.11n products. The rejection of the draft has no effect on the products at all. We knew from the start that the ratification would be a long process and did not expect them to ratify the standard this year or at least until the second half of next year," says Tobie van Schalkwyk, country manager for D-Link SA.

Van Schalkwyk adds: "I still recommend corporate customers to stick with either 802.11a or 802.11g, until 802.11n is ratified. This is because, in most cases, different vendor products will not be able to communicate with each other until the standards are set by the IEEE."

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