

## **The Association & Wi-Fi**

There has been a great deal of interest and questions lately from our clients regarding their associations setting up Wi-Fi (Phonically pronounced: “why-fi”) for the entire membership. We currently have two associations with Wi-Fi systems and the membership of these associations utilize this amenity. Without going into the expense and possible budget issues we wanted to provide an overview of what Wi-Fi is all about.

Wi-Fi was originally developed for laptops and other mobile computing devices. It is now being used for Internet access, cellular phones, and gaming. It is also being used for basic connectivity of electronics like televisions, DVD players, digital cameras, security cameras, personal GPS. In the near future Wi-Fi will be used on the roads by automobiles to support Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) that will improve safety and aid in driving needs.

A Wi-Fi enables a computer, cell phone etc. to connect to the Internet when in range of access point (AP). The area encompassing one or more access points is called a hotspot. Hot-Zones can range from an individual class room to many square miles of overlapping hotspots. Wi-Fi generally contains one or more Access Points (APs) and one or more users.

The Wi-Fi technology received a substandard reputation when it was first introduced commercially. There were initially many issues because products from different manufacturers were not compatible with one another. As a result the Wi-Fi Alliance was organized to resolve these many issues. The Wi-Fi Alliance originated the trademark or branding Wi-Fi Certified to let buyers know which products were compatible with one another. Unlike cellular, Wi-Fi Certified has a global set of usage standards allowing its use around the world.

Security concerns were once a major concern, but with the current encryption technology and the use of passwords and personal firewalls this is not as much of a concern. Wi-Fi networks can be broken into and used to intercept data (including personal information) transmitted over the network when no encryption is used. Another minor issue is that certain cordless phones and microwave ovens can disrupt Wi-Fi signals.

The primary benefit of Wi-Fi is the cost per user is generally lower than individual internet subscriptions. It also allows the membership to have Internet access without the need to run cabling. This allows access anywhere around the association. The cost of Wi-Fi technology continues to drop, making Wi-Fi a very affordable networking option and thus making it more practical to be built into other devices in the future.

There is currently an estimated 250,000 public hot spots around the world and millions of individual homes, corporations, and university campuses worldwide as well. It is theorized that in the future, hotspots will be almost everywhere where there is substantial population to support the use.

Wi-Fi is a registered trademark of the Wi-Fi Alliance. The Wi-Fi Alliance is a trade organization that tests and certifies equipment compliance of the Wi-Fi technology.