



Q&A

Wi-Fi Protected Access™

1. Q: What is Wi-Fi Protected Access?

A: Wi-Fi Protected Access is a specification of standards-based, interoperable security enhancements, which strongly increase the level of data protection (encryption) and access control (authentication) for existing and future Wi-Fi wireless LAN systems.

2. Q: How long will Wi-Fi Protected Access be an effective security solution?

A: Wi-Fi Protected Access will be deployed starting in early 2003 and will be viable for many years to come.

3. Q: Is Wi-Fi Protected Access an IEEE 802.11 standard?

A: No, but it is based on an IEEE 802.11 standard. Wi-Fi Protected Access is derived from the forthcoming IEEE 802.11i draft standard and is designed to be forward-compatible with that standard when it is published.

4. Q: How did Wi-Fi Protected Access come into being?

A: Wi-Fi's original security mechanism, Wired Equivalent Privacy (WEP), has been viewed as insufficient for securing confidential business communications. A longer term solution, the IEEE 802.11i standard, is under development. However, since the IEEE 802.11i standard is not expected to be published until the end of 2003, several members of the Wi-Fi Alliance teamed up with members of the IEEE 802.11i task group to develop a significant near-term enhancement to Wi-Fi security. Together, this team developed Wi-Fi Protected Access.

The effort was also driven by the need for enhanced Wi-Fi security that would be software-upgradeable to the more than 650 Wi-Fi CERTIFIED products in existence today. Wi-Fi Protected Access is designed to be a software upgrade, whereas obtaining all of the advantages of the full IEEE 802.11i standard will likely require a hardware change.

5. Q: How secure is Wi-Fi Protected Access?

A: Wi-Fi Protected Access is a very strong wireless security enhancement. While no security solution can ever claim to be "absolutely secure", the protection that Wi-Fi Protected Access provides is significant. Many cryptographers are confident that Wi-Fi Protected Access addresses all the known attacks on WEP. It also adds strong user authentication, which was absent in WEP.

6. Q: Will products that support Wi-Fi Protected Access ship with it turned on or off as the default?

A: Initially, the Wi-Fi Alliance will allow vendors the option to ship with Wi-Fi Protected Access turned on or off. Eventually, it may be a requirement to ship with it turned on.

7. Q: When will products with Wi-Fi Protected Access be available?

A: Initial shipments of products with Wi-Fi Protected Access are expected to begin in May 2003. Many other vendors will ship during the course of 2003.

