

Wi-Fi Gives Laptop Users Untethered Internet Access

(NAPSA)—Along the grassy median of a busy downtown street, a canopy of elm trees creates a shady oasis where couples can nestle, shoppers can take a breather and computer users can roam the Internet on their laptop PCs.

Wait a minute. Laptop users connecting to the Internet in an urban park?

That's right. New, easy-to-use wireless technologies offer laptop users the freedom to surf the Web without being tethered to an Internet cord at home or in the office. Experts predict that more than 200,000 wireless "hot spots"—locations that offer wireless access to the Web—will be available worldwide within five years. Already, laptop users across the United States can jump online wirelessly in airports, coffee shops, hotels, urban parks and even some McDonald's restaurants.

How does it work? The technology that enables this wireless emancipation is known as 802.11, Wireless Fidelity—or "Wi-Fi" for short. It allows the operator of a wireless hot spot to distribute Internet connections about 100 feet via low-powered radio signal to anyone with a properly equipped computer.

"The beauty of Wi-Fi is that it allows people the freedom and flexibility to access the Internet in more places than ever before," said Tracy Overby, product manager for the Windows Division at Microsoft Corp. "And once you have decided to go wireless, Windows XP Professional will help make the experience both easier and more secure."

Getting connected to wireless hot spots is easy? Absolutely. All that's needed is a recent-model laptop and a wireless networking card; some laptops, including Tablet PCs, even come with these cards built in. Laptop users also need to find a wireless service provider and choose an appropriate wireless plan. At home, Wi-Fi at the end of a high-speed digital subscriber line (DSL) or broadband connection makes it easier to view large files (though it costs more than dial-up service).

To get the most out of going Wi-Fi, laptop users should ensure their



Increasingly, laptop computer users can jump onto the Internet in urban, park-like settings via wireless fidelity, or Wi-Fi.

laptop's operating system is up to the rigors of wireless computing. Microsoft Windows XP Professional is a prime example of an operating system built for people who don't want to compromise on reliability or security enhancements to enjoy the freedom that wireless computing offers. Among the features of Windows XP designed to maximize Wi-Fi are these:

- "Sniffing out" hot spots. Only avid Wi-Fi enthusiasts know the exact range of their local wireless hot spots. Windows XP Professional "sniffs out" available hot spots and notifies laptop users when one is available, leaving the guesswork to the computer.

- Easy setup. For those who don't want to spend time fussing with their laptop's internal settings, Windows XP Professional makes it easy to move from hot spot to hot spot with minimal setup.

- Enhanced security. Want to protect your data? Windows XP Professional will not only tell you if a wireless network is available, it will indicate whether it is security enhanced. Windows XP Professional has built-in support for the Wired Equivalent Privacy protocol, which encrypts data on wireless networks. A newer, more robust method for wireless security enhancement, Wi-Fi Protected Access, can be downloaded free (connect-time charges may apply) for additional data protection and encryption.

For more information, visit <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/>.