

MyWireless/Wi-Fi

MyWireless and Wi-Fi – Compatible but very different

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IT'S easy to get your wires crossed about Wi-Fi and Sentech's broadband wireless (BBW) service known as MyWireless because they're compatible while being poles apart.

'Wireless' refers to communication technology free of interconnecting wires and cables such as radio, microwave, and satellite.

Broadband refers to a connection speed from 128Kbps and higher from the end user to the network provider.

Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity) is a broadband wireless LAN technology using the 2.4 GHz radio frequency (RF) spectrum. With Wi-Fi you still need a physical connection to get access to the Internet. This link is often provided by 56 Kbps dial-up, ISDN or ADSL. In other words, Telkom and twisted strands of copper wire re-enter the equation.

MyWireless is an IP based multi-media (audio, video, text and data) service provided on the 2.5 GHz to 2.7 GHz RF spectrum, that provides a fast Internet connection from the high powered base station directly to the end user's wireless modem.

The technology is based on the globally recognized 3G Universal Mobile Telecommunications System (UMTS) standard.

MyWireless and Wi-Fi both enable Internet over the air, but Wi-Fi has some limitations.

The radio band is unregulated and unlicensed and largely un-secure. Anyone with the right equipment can tap in. If you are an ordinary consumer at a Wi-Fi café and you just want to check your Internet horoscope this is hardly a problem.

But if you're a business or an individual with security concerns, then maybe this is not the format for you.

Legislation also prevents a service provider from offering Wi-Fi connectivity to an end user if the communication (radio frequency) is transmitted across a public property and is thus restricted to use in a single contiguous environment.

The BBW spectrum allocated to Sentech is strictly controlled and regulated to prevent and monitor against interference from any other transmissions. Sentech is licensed by government to operate in this spectrum and the technology ensures that the connection from the base station to the wireless modem is encrypted and highly secure.

Another limitation is the tight radius of a Wi-Fi hot-spot – the area that picks up the signal. It can be less than 100m across so the customer tends to be at a single location that hooks up some additional users (i.e. a LAN) or browsing the Internet at a coffee shop.

In contrast, a MyWireless broadband base station has a footprint of approximately 5km even in densely populated urban areas. In rural SA it might be up to 15km. You can serve hundreds, even thousands of customers at a time. This "hot zone" gives the user the flexibility of accessing the Internet anywhere under the blanket of coverage.

The starting option for the home user offers always-on convenience and a fixed monthly cost (no dial-up delays and reconnection charges).

This is pretty much the MyWireless 128 package, Sentech's internet product for cost-conscious consumers.

BBW to small and mid-size business is another option. So look out for MyWireless offerings to companies across bandwidths of 256Kbps or 512Kbps. Customized VPNs (Virtual Private Networks) to Big Business are also on the BBW horizon.

Though BBW and Wi-Fi are different, they are NOT mutually exclusive. In the past, Wi-Fi masts had to go the dial-up or ADSL route, to access Internet bandwidth, but a broadband wireless modem now offers a more viable alternative.

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