

Verizon sees door open to airliner WiFi

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Verizon is ready to start offering in-flight broadband service to airline passengers in 2007.

Verizon Airfone said Tuesday that last week's issuance of Federal Communications Commission rules on spectrum auctions opens the door to broadband WiFi service for passengers thousands of feet in the air.

"We are pleased with the FCC's efforts to promote the development of broadband services, and we urge the FCC to move as quickly as possible to auction new licenses in the 800 megahertz band," said Bill Pallone, president of Verizon Airfone. "There are many interested airlines and general aviation operators that share our commitment to this broadband vision."

The company said it had been conducting field trials since 2004 of service capable of ground-to-air peak speeds of 2.4 megabits per second, which can accommodate not only Web browsing and e-mail service but Voice over Internet Protocol telephony as well.

Verizon Airfone's WiFi technology is based on CDMA2000 1xEV-DO with special provisions for extended distances and Doppler compensation for high-speed aircraft. The system won't interfere with cockpit electronics.

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