

WiFi, WiMax hybrid for public safety

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Airspan Networks has developed a wireless communications system that blends WiFi and WiMax technologies for public-safety agencies.

The system provides the range of a WiMax system with the signal quality of WiFi. The key, the Florida company said Tuesday, is that the tri-band technology allows the system to be expanded without the need to add large numbers of hops -- the process of moving data packets through a system of routers, a process that can degrade performance.

"WiFi-only mesh solutions have been shown not to scale as the number of hops grows," AirSpan President Eric Stonestrom said. "With our solution, municipalities and operators can get the best of both worlds at no extra cost."

AirSpan said the system is available for backhaul on the 4.9 gigahertz band, which is licensed for public safety, and in the 5.8 GHz unlicensed band for municipal wireless systems. In addition, there is a 2.4 GHz antenna for WiFi access.

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