

# Netgear Routers to Add QoS for Home Video Streaming

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In June, Netgear plans to add quality-of-service (QoS) enhancements to its top-of-the-line RangeMAX 802.11n routers to improve the quality of home video, a source close to the company said.

The QoS enhancements will be added to Netgear's RangeMAX NEXT Wireless-N router line, as a "version 2.0" product, the source said. While the products won't be broken out into a separate product line, existing owners of the RangeMAX line won't be able to upgrade their existing routers to add the new functionality, the source said.

With the exception of D-Link, most consumer routers have foregone QoS enhancements, which allow consumers to prioritize traffic. When placing a VOIP call, for example, some routers will simply give the VOIP traffic the same priority as an FTP download which otherwise saturates the connection. That, in turn, can cause dropouts and other pauses in the conversation.

D-Link's DI-724GU Gigabit Office Router already includes QoS prioritization. A separate standalone device, the DI-102, serves as a standalone QoS optimization tool, designed specifically to improve the quality of VOIP calls. It retails for about \$79.99.

It wasn't clear how many models in the RangeMAX line would receive the enhancements. Netgear sells the RangeMAX NextWNR834B for about \$120, and a faster WNR854T with a gigabit LAN connection for about \$130.

However, the improvements to the Netgear line are being made to improve the quality of digital video, the Netgear source said. " - For - all of our top devices, we are going to be adding this enhanced QoS feature," he said. 'We will be making sure video is a top feature, for not just the Xbox 360 and PlayStation, but also our EVA8000 box," he said.

That's because yesterday's user watched movies on his computer. These days, consumers prefer to go back to their TV. And that, in turn, means users will be streaming videos over the wireless network. 802.11b Wi-Fi was suitable for Web surfing and some audio streaming, while 802.11g allowed some basic video capabilities. But Netgear is looking to powerline networking as a wired backbone in the home, and then to QoS-enhanced 802.11n to stream video.

Also, in Europe, IPTV providers are streaming video to the home, but looking for alternatives to route it around the house. "Coax doesn't exist in Europe," the source said.

The improved RangeMAX routers will include a list of about 20 of the top applications, pre-prioritized so that users don't have to worry. Adding a device or software program allows the user to assign one of four priority levels to the corresponding traffic: highest, high, medium, and normal.

However, new applications or devices – such as a game console – can also be added, and the source specifically said that consoles won't be pre-configured. "If I'm a hard-core gamer I just want to prioritize the games," the source said. "Since it's an Internet device, I simply assign its MAC address and give it the highest priority."

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