

Qualcomm rolls out next generation Wi-Fi technology to improve remote work, online schooling

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One thing that remote work and online schooling made clear over the last several weeks of coronavirus shutdowns is the importance of good quality Wi-Fi.

Last week, Qualcomm announced a series of new Wi-Fi chips aimed at boosting speeds and capacity for both home and business Wi-Fi networks.

Tapping the latest Wi-Fi 6 technology and airwave spectrum recently earmarked for unlicensed uses, Qualcomm's new Wi-Fi processors can deliver peak speeds between 3 and 3.6 gigabits per second to smartphones, tablets, laptops and other mobile devices, according to the company.

"We are going through a very exciting phase in the world of Wi-Fi," said Rahul Patel, [senior vice president](#) and general manager of connectivity for the company. "It will be a [significant upgrade](#) from where the home was in terms of Wi-Fi connectivity six or nine months back."

That type of performance could result in glitch-free video calls, fast downloads even when multiple devices are connected and low latency for gaming and untethered virtual reality.

The technology will show up in a few mobile devices and routers by the end of this year, said Patel, while laptops with the technology are likely to hit the market in the first half of next year.

Qualcomm's Wi-Fi [chip](#) family targets both mobile devices and access points, routers and other behind the scenes gear that powers Wi-Fi networks.

In late April, the Federal Communications Commission set aside a large swath of airwave spectrum in the 6-gigahertz frequency band for unlicensed uses, which today means mostly Wi-Fi and Bluetooth.

It was a significant addition to Wi-Fi/Bluetooth airwave capacity, said Patel.

"We have a brand new freeway that is 2.5 times larger than what we've had to work with for the last 20 years," he said.

Several companies including chip rival Broadcom have introduced Wi-Fi 6 radios—the latest generation of the Wi-Fi standard that improves performance in existing 2.4 gigahertz and 5 gigahertz unlicensed bands.

But Qualcomm new Wi-Fi 6 Extended chips tap the newly available 6-gigahertz spectrum as well.

"Wi-Fi 6E delivers an unprecedented improvement in capacity to meet the rapid growth of connected devices and data demand," said Geoff Blaber, vice president of CCS Insights, an industry research firm. "The introduction of supporting chipsets so soon after FCC ruling ensures customers will see the benefits quickly."

While Qualcomm is known for cellular technology that operates in licensed spectrum bands, it also has a significant Wi-Fi business. It has shipped 4.5 billion Wi-Fi chips since 2015 and industry leader in access points, Wi-Fi mesh and other gear used in business networks. Many Android smartphones powered Qualcomm's Snapdragon processors also include its Wi-Fi and Bluetooth chips.

Qualcomm introduced two chip platforms aimed at [mobile devices](#), the FastConnect 6900 with peak speeds of 3.6 gigabits per second and the FastConnect 6700 with to speeds of 3 gigabits per second.

It also rolled out four Wi-Fi 6E platforms for routers, access points and other network gear, with peak speeds ranging from 10.8 to 5.4 gigabits per second.

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