

TIP OF THE MONTH

Secure your wireless access points and routers

Wireless access is everywhere. From laptops and phones to remote controls and game systems, we take for granted that this technology was non-existent to the average consumer just 10 years ago. Wireless technologies have made are world more convenient, efficient, and fun.

However, with these benefits, most people take for granted the need to secure their wireless access points and routers. Remember, with wireless you can't see someone using your wireless connection to use your internet service for free or worse, hack into your home computer.

Fortunately, the steps you need to take to secure your wireless access points and routers are relatively simple even though they sound complicated. Most consumer wireless equipment comes with setup wizards to get you through the process.

- 1) Secure and encrypt your Wi-Fi access point with WEP (preferably 128 bit) or WPA.
- 2) Change the default SSID name which broadcasts the name of your wireless access point or router.
- 3) You can take the added step of preventing broadcast of your SSID although this will mean your Wireless Access point or router will not show up when you scan for wireless access points from your PC.
- 4) Additionally, you can take it further by restricting access to specific PCs and devices by MAC address.

Glossary:

Wi-Fi – The name of a popular wireless networking technology that uses radio waves to provide wireless high-speed internet and network.

WEP - *Wired Equivalent Privacy*, a security protocol for wireless local area networks.

WPA - *Wi-Fi Protected Access*, a standard that was designed to improve upon the security features of WEP by adding improved encryption and user authentication.

SSID - *Service set identifier*, broadcast by Wireless access points and routers to identify one wireless network from another.

MAC address - *Media Access Control address*, a hardware address that uniquely identifies each PC, laptop, phone, printer, or any other device that connects to the network.