Cisco Wireless Wi-Fi 7 Products and Licensing

Models overview and availability

Q: What does Cisco's Wi-Fi 7 access point portfolio include?

A: Cisco® Wireless announced its next-generation Wi-Fi 7 access points in November 2024, and has been launching a full portfolio including high-performance omnidirectional and internal directional antenna models as well as specialty form factors for hospitality and large public venues.

Q: What are the specifications of the Wi-Fi 7 models?

A: For detailed specifications and technical information on each access point, please consult the product data sheets for the specific series here.

Q: Will Wi-Fi 7 access points support different management modes, like cloud or wireless controller management?

A: Yes, Cisco Wireless is introducing global use access points with the Wi-Fi 7 portfolio, designed to intelligently determine your preferred network management mode and be redeployed to a different mode if your network management strategy changes. These access points do not require specific SKUs or country codes at the time of order, allowing ease and flexibility during your purchase and deployment phases.

Q: Do the Wi-Fi 7 access points have environmental sensors?

A: No, they do not include environmental sensors. Customers can use Cisco Meraki™ or third-party sensors to monitor air quality, temperature, humidity, water leaks, and door status. Meraki sensors are currently supported on the Meraki dashboard, with future support for on-premises access points planned.

Q: Will additional Wi-Fi 7 models be available?

A: Yes, the Cisco Wireless portfolio will include additional models and form factors, with availability staggered. For the latest information on Wi-Fi 7 access points, please contact your Cisco sales representative.

Q: Do the Wi-Fi 7 access points support Bluetooth or other functionality?

A: All Wi-Fi 7 access points from Cisco Wireless will support Bluetooth technology. Both the Cisco Wireless 9178 and 9176 Series support ultra-wideband technology for enhanced location services.

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Wi-Fi 7 considerations

Q: Should I upgrade my wireless network to Wi-Fi 7?

A: Network upgrade decisions dépend on factors such as current infrastructure, network size, budget, and labor. Wi-Fi 7 is an incremental upgrade compared to Wi-Fi 6E, which already supports the 6-GHz spectrum.

Q: What other factors should I consider when deciding whether to adopt Wi-Fi 7?

A:

- **Client support:** There are a growing number of client devices that are Wi-Fi 7 certfied. Check the Wi-Fi Alliance's product finder to see which products have Wi-Fi 7 certification. https://www.wi-fi.org/product-finder.
- **Switching infrastructure:** Plan for more than 30W per port for 4x4, tri-band Wi-Fi 7 access points. Check the datasheet for each model to determine power requirements.
- **Refresh timeline:** Any access points that are past Last Day of Support (LDOS) should be immediately replaced by Wi-Fi 7 access points to reduce risk of security vulnerabilities and to access hardware support. This includes "802.11ac Wave 1 access points. Wave 2 Aironet and Meraki access points have been announced end of sale, so plan to refresh before these access points reach LDOS. Dates vary; check the end-of-sale announcement for each AP to determine LDOS.
- **Client operating systems:** As of May 2025, there is no MacOS support, and Windows 11 support is available in version 24H2.
- **Controller code:** Confirm which IOS-XE version is needed for each access points. CW9178, CW9176I, and CW9176D1 require IOS-XE 17.15.2 or later. CW9172I requires IOS-XE 17.15.2b or later, and CW9172H requires IOS-XE 17.17.1 or later.
- **Design considerations:** A 1:1 replacement can be made if surveys are done for 2.4, 5, and 6 GHz for Wi-Fi 6E.

A site survey can help you assess these factors for purchasing new wireless access points, as there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution.

Wi-Fi 7 licensing

Q: Is a software subscription license mandatory for Wi-Fi 7 access points?

A: You can opt out at purchase and buy software separately, but an active license is required for full functionality. For more information on the Cisco Networking Subscription and licensing for Wi-Fi 7 products, please see the Cisco Networking Subscription data sheet.

Q: How does licensing work with a mix of Wi-Fi 7 and earlier access point generations?

A: A 9800 Series Wireless LAN Controller (WLC) supports both Cisco DNA and unified licensing, allowing you to use existing Cisco DNA licenses while migrating to Wi-Fi 7 with unified licensing.

Q: Do I need to purchase DNA and UL licenses if I am managing Wi-Fi 7 and earlier generation APs on the same Wireless Lan Controller (WLC)?

A: No, earlier generation Access Points (APs) are able to consume unified licenses through Cisco Smart Software Manager (CSSM). This means you can purchase unified licenses and use them with earlier generation APs as well. Note - a minimum firmware version of 17.15.x or higher is required for this compatibility, as Wi-Fi 7 APs and unified licenses were introduced starting with the 17.15.x firmware release.

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Q: What are the license enforcement scenarios?

A: With Cisco Networking Subscription, there are enforcement scenarios that apply:

- License expiration:
  - Devices will continue to pass traffic.
  - Management and monitoring via Cisco network management platforms will be restricted.
  - On-device management (WebUI, CLI, API) will be available.
  - Software updates will be restricted, except for Product Security Incident Response Team (PSIRT) and critical bug fixes.
  - Additional Cisco cloud-based services and features (e.g., Spaces, ISE, TE) included in the management license or sold as addons will be restricted.
  - Access to Cisco support provided through the subscription will be denied.

Q: How can I check licensing compliance?

A: The Meraki dashboard, Cisco Catalyst™ Center, WebUI, and Command-Line Interface (CLI) provide visibility and alerts for licensing compliance.

Q: How soon will I receive a license acknowledgment after adding a Wi-Fi 7 access point to a WLC?

A: If previously licensed, the access point is active immediately. If new, it will be subject to the "never licensed" enforcement scenario until the first sync cycle. This initial sync generally happens within 5 to 10 minutes and can be manually triggered to minimize wait time.

Wi-Fi standards information

Q: What are some key differences between Wi-Fi 7 and previous generations?

A: Some notable enhancements in the Wi-Fi 7 standard include:

- **4K QAM:** Higher data transmission rates are possible with 4096 QAM.
- **Doubled channel width:** Channel width is increased to 320 MHz, offering higher throughput.
- **Multilink operation:** Allows traffic on multiple bands simultaneously, improving speed and reliability.
- **Preamble puncturing:** Reduces the impact of interference by carving out affected channel parts.

Q: What roles do the IEEE and Wi-Fi Alliance play in new Wi-Fi standards?

A: The IEEE develops technical standards, while the Wi-Fi Alliance certifies products to ensure interoperability and standards compliance. Cisco has a longstanding relationship with both of these standards bodies, enabling better outcomes for our Cisco Wireless product designs and functionality.

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