

Indigo Broadband offers TVWS technology

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Indigo Broadband has been appointed the authorised sub-Saharan distributor of television white spaces (TVWS) network systems developed by Carlson Wireless of Eureka, California.

Broadband networks that operate in the TVWS allow cost-effective connectivity for communities not serviced by the current market offerings that are either not available or unaffordable to them.

Carlson Wireless Technologies achieved the CE Mark certification in April 2019, indicating that the Carlson Generation 3 RuralConnect base stations and customer premises equipment (CPEs) meets European Union standards for telecommunications systems certified by ETSI, the European Telecommunications Standards Institute. Carlson Wireless Gen3 RuralConnect products are already FCC-certified in the US.

This CE Mark and regulatory approval by ETSI means that Carlson Wireless' TVWS systems meet the type-approval requirements of South African regulatory authority, ICASA.

In another first, Indigo Broadband worked extensively with local experts from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to ensure these systems also meet ICASA requirements for interaction with the required reference Geo-Location Database (the GLDB or GDB).

"Indigo has been working very hard over the past years to bring Carlson Wireless Technologies products to this region – in the right way," says Keith Pitout, chief technology officer of Indigo Broadband South Africa. "Meeting both the required ETSI certification and the technical interfaces to regulator-mandated systems were followed, together with establishing the service and support resources to ensure this technology can be rolled out for commercial broadband services."

The product range includes the Carlson Wireless Gen3 and Gen3 Mini RuralConnect products. The big brother in the range is a three-radio/three-sector base station, providing an aggregate capacity of up to 96Mbps. This could provide up to 60 separate households or small businesses with 3Mbps connections.

Carlson RuralConnect systems can reach over 15km if there is clear line of sight, or 5km to 10km near-line-of-sight where there are obstructions such as hills or trees. Carlson is soon bringing to market an entry level "Mini" version equipped with one radio that can be easily set up in a public building, office or home location with access to a traditional telecoms network connection, linking to it up to 20 end user sites with a return on investment of less than one year.

The long range capabilities under difficult terrain makes the TVWS systems from Carlson ideally suited to rural or underserved areas. Other radio technologies have limited or no range in a "near-line-of-sight application", making their deployment cost-prohibitive in many applications.

"We have been working with Indigo Broadband very closely, because TVWS technology has the power to radically improve access to Internet connectivity for many communities. However, regulatory requirements are necessarily strict. Introduction into new markets must be done methodically and in full co-operation with local authorities," says James Carlson, CEO of Carlson Wireless.

"Indigo Broadband is a great partner for us in Southern Africa, with a rigorous technical process and years of hard-won expertise in deploying new connectivity technologies."

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