



PORT NETWORKS

PRESS RELEASE

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BALTIMORE WELCOMES TALL SHIPS WITH PORT NETWORKS WI-FI SERVICE

Baltimore, MD – July 31, 2007 – Those who sailed away on tall ships once went years without hearing from their loved ones, but today's tall ship crews can easily connect to friends and family while they visit Baltimore, thanks to a partnership between Sail Baltimore and local wireless Internet service provider Port Networks.

Through a series of Wi-Fi access points installed on the piers where visiting tall ships dock, Port Networks is offering free Wi-Fi service to crew members visiting the port. The access points offer both 802.11b and 802.11g access, with speeds up to 54Mbps.

Sail Baltimore, a non-profit organization that makes arrangements for the visiting ships, approached Port Networks for a solution after fielding repeated requests for Internet access from visiting crews.

"These days, the sailors aboard tall ships rely on email to stay in contact with people at home, and they use the worldwide web as a source of important information. Almost every crew asks us how they can get connected while they're in Baltimore. The new wireless service will be a great amenity for all of the sailors visiting our port," says Laura Stevenson, Executive Director of Sail Baltimore.

Crews can use the Wi-Fi service to send and receive email, download weather reports and updated navigational charts, and purchase supplies online. Because crews frequently enjoy shore leave while in the City, having Wi-Fi access also provides them with a quick way to get information about local sites and upcoming events.

"The Internet offers a great many resources to those traveling by ship, and we're pleased to provide this service to visiting tall ships," says Port Networks General Manager Hugh Bethell. "Underwriting the availability of Wi-Fi along the piers is our way of giving back to a City that has been great to our company."

(MORE)

PORT NETWORKS, LLC

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Ready to Communicate?

Although most of its customers are land-based, Port Networks has always had a connection with those who sail the seas. The company's blue and gold signal flag logo and its service mark, Ready to Communicate?, come from the centuries-old system that sailors used to send messages between ships. (Each flag represented both a letter of the alphabet, and -- for faster communication -- a commonly used phrase. The "K" flag that Port Networks now uses as its logo was used to signal that a ship was "ready to communicate.")

Port Networks also got its start on the edge of the Inner Harbor, serving up Wi-Fi for boat owners docked at the various marinas in Baltimore. The company currently offers service at the Anchorage, HarborView, Inner Harbor East, Henderson's Wharf, Parkside, and Chester Cove marinas. Monthly service is available for \$24.95, while a day of Internet is priced at \$6.95.

Possible Expansion

Although the new Wi-Fi access points installed for visiting tall ships cover only portions of the Inner Harbor seawall, Port Networks and Sail Baltimore hope to see the system expanded in the future. The City of Baltimore has held informal meetings exploring the possibility of making Wi-Fi available all along the waterfront promenade, which many see as a potential drawing card for more visitors.

"Having Wi-Fi throughout the Inner Harbor would benefit a lot of groups, from visitors who need to check in with the office to merchants doing business along the harbor," says Bethell. "It would also be great if downtown workers could head out to the new park at the west end of the harbor and get their work done from outside."

Currently, the City and its Wi-Fi providers are exploring how such a system could be financed. Preliminary cost estimates suggest that a free downtown network could be implemented for \$50,000 and maintained for \$5,000 per month. One proposal is to solicit a corporate sponsor or group of sponsors to underwrite those costs in exchange for appearing on the introductory screens greeting those signing on to the Wi-Fi system.

About Port Networks

Port Networks is a privately-held wireless equipment developer and Internet service provider, located in Baltimore, MD. The company was founded in 2003 and serves customers in the marine, residential, and commercial markets.

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