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Home Automation Solves Real Problems

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[1] Do the words "wireless home control" and "automation" make you think of "The Jetsons," complete with flying cars and a robot maid? Home automation has been around for years. New technology and more practical, affordable applications are now bringing the benefits of home automation to ordinary people.

What exactly is wireless home automation? Simply put, wireless home automation gives you automatic control of things around the home -- meaning the control of appliances through a device such as a remote control, cell phone or personal computer. Basic systems have been around for years, but have been plagued by poor performance, high prices, complicated set-up and operation, and in many cases, the need to rewire the home.

Today, you can head to various home center and electronic retail outlets and purchase a wireless home automation starter kit for as low as \$100 with options available to do more than just lighting control. For example, using today's technology, you can receive a text message at work telling you that your kids have arrived home from school, turn off the downstairs TV from the upstairs bedroom, or turn up the heater during your evening commute.

The best part? Automated homes aren't just a reality for the wealthy or tech-savvy anymore -- with the affordability and ease-of-use of the products on the market, virtually anyone can wirelessly automate their home. For instance, devices using Z-Wave, the standard in wireless home control found in more than 170 products, are interoperable; therefore users can start with a few products and add on over time to suit their individual needs. The benefits and products available are ideal solutions for wireless home automation novices.

Key benefits of wireless home control available from the Z-Wave Alliance (a consortium of companies dedicated to establishing standards, interoperability and affordability in wireless controls) include:

Energy Conservation

With gas and electric bills climbing and the impact of global warming in the minds of consumers, energy conservation is as much a boon to the environment as it is to the pocketbook. Wireless home control and automation technologies have emerged as key enablers for today's energy-intelligent homes.

Using a wide range of sensors and controllers, Z-Wave can precisely tailor a home's energy usage by the

device, by the room or by the whole house. Homeowners can also monitor usage from anywhere in the world via an Internet connection, with real-time control over their HVAC system, lights and appliances.

Home Security/Remote Home Monitoring

Security is top-of-mind for many homeowners. Wireless home automation solutions allow consumers to remotely monitor who is in and around their homes, whether they are down the street or thousands of miles away.

Z-Wave-enabled systems can also go beyond home security, allowing consumers to receive real-time email or text message alerts when movement is sensed in certain areas of the house. Users can keep an eye on Fido or their nanny throughout the workday.

"We suggest placing motion-detectors and cameras near windows and doors on the ground floor of the house," says Mark Walters, chairman of the Z-Wave Alliance and a home automation expert. "Users can then receive an alert and image of the situation when the sensor is triggered."

Home Health Care

As the baby boomer generation ages, consumers are increasingly concerned with the health and safety of elderly parents. Wireless home automation gives consumers peace of mind knowing that loved ones are safe and sound.

"Our users install motion sensors on medicine cabinet doors to alert them via cell phone when the door does, or does not, open," Walters says. "It's a perfect, unobtrusive way to keep watch over an elderly relative."

In sum, wireless home automation is no longer just for "The Jetsons" -- it's for real people looking to solve real problems. And since wireless home automation allows a wide array of devices around the home to communicate -- including lighting, appliances, HVAC, entertainment centers and security systems -- the opportunities to design a user-specific connected home are endless.

For additional ideas on how affordable wireless home automation can provide easy solutions to everyday problems, please visit www.z-wave.com [2].

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