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Sirius Radio – Everything You Ever Wanted to Know

By Nick Smith

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Sirius radio, or more generally satellite radio, came out just a few years ago. If you've never listened to satellite radio or heard about it, this article is your lucky break. In this article you'll find out what satellite radio is and how it works.

What Is Satellite Radio?

Just like the name indicates, satellite radio uses satellites and related equipment to broadcast radio channels to car or home radios. The concept really received its impetus in 1992 when the FCC set aside a chunk of radio frequency for what they called Digital Audio Radio Service (DARS). Five years later, Sirius Radio and XM Satellite Radio purchased licenses from the FCC, and both companies started putting the pieces into place to be able to start broadcasting.

Conventional radio waves can only travel 35 to 45 miles before they die out. The signal for satellite radio services is broadcast more than 20,000 miles above the Earth's surface. Programming on satellite radio is subscriber based, meaning you pay a monthly fee to descramble the signal from the satellites. But, most satellite radio service comes commercial free, so you don't have to worry about channel hopping. Channels include music, talk radio, sporting events, kids programs, and news.

The Who's Who of Satellite Radio

There are currently three major players in the satellite radio game: Sirius radio, XM satellite radio, and WorldSpace. Sirius radio covers North America, including the continental U.S., Canada, and Alaska. XM provides service in the continental U.S. WorldSpace is developing coverage in other parts of the world (Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America) and are definitely the most ambitious in terms of client coverage (a potential of 4.6 billion clients covered on 5 different continents). Each company uses different satellite technology and methods to provide service in their respective areas.

Satellite radio equipment, such as car receivers and home stereos, are sold at a variety of consumer electronic stores, and are starting to become standard installations in new cars. Conventional radios cannot receive satellite radio transmissions, so picking up the service usually entails purchasing a receiver, though some kits are available to make conventional radios satellite-radio compatible.

Because of the different technology each company utilizes, receivers are not compatible with every company. For example, if you subscribed to XM but then wanted to switch to Sirius radio, you would need to get a new receiver that was compatible with Sirius. Some satellite television companies include satellite radio service in their channel packages, and you can receive the transmission through your

television satellite dish.

How Does Satellite Radio Work?

This is the cool part. The music, talk show, sporting event, etc., are recorded digitally in a studio, after which the message is encoded. The encoded signal is sent to the satellites from ground stations (Sirius radio based in New York; XM based out of D.C.). The satellites then relay the signal to receivers in your car or at home. The receivers contain chipsets that decode the signal and play it through your stereo. In urban areas where taller buildings might block the signal from the satellites, ground repeaters or transmitters are used to resend the signal, eliminating pockets of dead space.

XM uses two satellites to cover the continental United States with their signal. Sirius radio uses three satellites to form a satellite constellation. The way they are set in orbit ensures that each satellite spends about 16 hours at a time covering the U.S. and that there is always at least one satellite over the U.S. at any given time. WorldSpace satellites beam three signals each to increase the amount of territory they are able to cover with their three satellites. All three companies have reserve satellites ready to launch in case one of their satellites stops working.

Satellite radio technology looks like it's here to stay. It is ideal for those that live in areas where normal radio reception is poor, or for those willing to pay a little each month to not have to listen to commercials. Chances are good that soon every new car you buy will have satellite radio installed, and that more and more homes will be equipped for it. I have only covered the basics. It is definitely worth your time to find out more about what each company has to offer.

Nick Smith is a client account specialist with

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Revenue. To find out how to get

with your satellite TV service, check out

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Not Sure Whether to Get Sirius Radio?

By Christine Breen

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Sirius Radio – Everything You Ever Wanted to Know

Sirius satellite radio is a service offering 100 streams of Sirius radio featuring digital-quality, music, news, sports and entertainment programming. They use three satellites orbiting directly over the United States to broadcast 100 streams of Sirius radio to listeners throughout the continental US. Their monthly subscription fee is \$12.95. Sirius satellite radio delivers 60 streams of 100% commercial-free music in every genre plus 40 streams of sports, news and entertainment.

Starting in September, Sirius satellite radio subscribers will get the full lineup of NFL games each week. That's right, they're broadcasting every game including select pre-season and play-off games. You'll get every game during the regular season, with coverage from the home team announcers. And it's all included with your regular Sirius radio subscription: no extra charges, fees or packages. Just the best sports available. As an added bonus, they'll be introducing the NFL Radio Network, loaded with the best football commentary and action. It will provide year-round coverage of the NFL including exclusive coverage for Sirius radio subscribers, as well as programs from the NFL Network.

Sirius Radio is better than regular radio programming because they are completely commercial free, offers original Sirius satellite radio programming not just the top 40 repeated ad nauseum, and they feature news and sports channels from content providers like CNBC, FOX News, C-SPAN, NPR, PRI, and ESPN.

Sirius Radio uses statistical multiplexing technology which provides more bandwidth across the full spectrum of Sirius satellite radio streams. This means better overall sound quality and superior sound resolution. It's near cd-quality.

The name Sirius radio comes from the brightest star in the constellation Canis Major and the Northern Hemisphere. It was named after the ancient Egyptian god Osiris, who was represented pictographically as a dog, giving Sirius its more familiar name: the Dog Star.

The Sirius satellite radio national broadcast studio complex is located in Rockefeller Center, in the heart of NYC. It is one of the largest, most sophisticated, digital broadcasting facilities in the world. The Sirius radio complex houses state-of-the-art production studios for 100 streams, plus four performance spaces for artists and musicians, and a comprehensive digital library currently housing over half a million songs.

You can get Sirius satellite receiver installed in your car or you can take Sirius radio from your car to your home, office, boat and beyond with their new Plug & Play systems.

Once you place your order the company will ship your Sirius satellite receiver fully activated and ready to use. All billing will be handled through the credit card you use to complete your purchase for Sirius radio.

With Sirius satellite radio you can still listen to terrestrial radio. Sirius radio will not prevent you from listening to your local AM/FM radio stations.

With the Plug & Play modules, you can either take Sirius satellite radio with you as you move vehicles

or you may chose to buy another unit for a 2nd vehicle. If you buy a separate unit, you will need a separate subscription for each vehicle, but you can put all of your subscriptions for Sirius radio under one account and receive one bill.

At this time Sirius satellite radio is only licensed to offer service within the continental United States. Sirius Radio is not free satellite and there is a low monthly subscription fee.

Christine Breen is the webmaster of the site 1stop-satellite-radio.com which educates consumers about satellite radio.



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