

WiMAX at the Beijing Olympics

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The 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing will give China a chance to highlight some of the progress the country has made with regards to its telecommunications infrastructure. Many industry insiders have speculated that WiMAX will have a strong presence at the games but the technology will most likely have a much smaller footprint at the games than initially expected.

Back in January 2007, the Beijing Olympic Radio Frequency Regulatory Office in conjunction with the Beijing Olympic Committee ended the application period for temporary radio licenses for use at the summer games. China Mobile appeared to be the big winner as it was announced in May 2007 that they had been authorized to provide WiMAX services during the games.

This announcement came as somewhat of a surprise as China Netcom was listed as the exclusive fixed line telecommunications partner for the 2008 Olympics. Initial reports stated that China Netcom would use the games as a platform to showcase its domestically developed broadband wireless access technology called Multicarrier Wireless Internet Local Loop or McWill. The standard is based on SCDMA technology and operates on the 400 MHz frequency band. In addition, the technology was backed by the Chinese Ministry of Information Industry (MII).

The selection of China Mobile however, indicates that the MII may have had a change of heart with regards to the McWill standard and the regulator would be shifting its support towards WiMAX. It was rumored that the China Mobile WiMAX network in Beijing would consist of 150 802.16d base stations to cover the Olympic village and the surrounding area.

This was a lofty goal considering that China Mobile was given only 15 months from the Beijing Olympic Committee authorization to the opening ceremonies and IMS Research projects that actual base station deployment numbers will be significantly smaller.

According to recent statements from Intel CEO Paul Otellini, there will be WiMAX trials at the Beijing Olympics but technology will mainly be used for the yachting events in Qingdao. Unfortunately, it seems as though WiMAX deployments at the 2008 Olympics will go as many WiMAX deployments have around the globe, over promised and under delivered.

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