



Information About CleanAir

This chapter describes information about CleanAir.

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CleanAir

Cisco CleanAir is a spectrum intelligence solution designed to proactively manage the challenges of a shared wireless spectrum. It allows you to see all of the users of the shared spectrum (both native devices and foreign interferers). It also enables you or your network to act upon this information. For example, you could manually remove the interfering device, or the system could automatically change the channel away from the interference. CleanAir provides spectrum management and RF visibility.

A Cisco CleanAir system consists of CleanAir-enabled access points, Cisco Wireless LAN Controllers, and Cisco Prime Infrastructure. These access points collect information about all devices that operate in the industrial, scientific, and medical (ISM) bands, identify and evaluate the information as a potential interference source, and forward it to the Cisco WLC. The Cisco WLC controls the access points, collects spectrum data, and forwards information to Cisco Prime Infrastructure or a Cisco mobility services engine (MSE) upon request.

For every device operating in the unlicensed band, Cisco CleanAir tells you what it is, where it is, how it is impacting your wireless network, and what actions you or your network should take. It simplifies RF so that you do not have to be an RF expert.

Wireless LAN systems operate in unlicensed 2.4- and 5-GHz ISM bands. Many devices, such as microwave ovens, cordless phones, and Bluetooth devices also operate in these bands and can negatively affect Wi-Fi operations.

Some of the most advanced WLAN services, such as voice over wireless and IEEE 802.11n radio communications, could be significantly impaired by the interference caused by other legal users of the ISM bands. The integration of Cisco CleanAir functionality into the Cisco Unified Wireless Network addresses this problem of radio frequency (RF) interference.

CleanAir is supported on mesh AP backhaul at a 5-GHz radio of mesh. You can enable CleanAir on backhaul radios and can provide report interference details and air quality.

This section contains the following subsections:

Role of the Cisco Wireless LAN Controller in a Cisco CleanAir System

The Cisco WLC performs the following tasks in a Cisco CleanAir system:

- Configures Cisco CleanAir capabilities on the access point.
- Provides interfaces (GUI, CLI, and SNMP) for configuring Cisco CleanAir features and retrieving data.
- Displays spectrum data.
- Collects and processes air quality reports from the access point and stores them in the air quality database. The Air Quality Report (AQR) contains information about the total interference from all identified sources represented by the Air Quality Index (AQI) and summary for the most severe interference categories. The CleanAir system can also include unclassified interference information under per interference type reports, which enables you to take action in cases where the interference due to unclassified interfering devices is more.
- Collects and processes interference device reports (IDRs) from the access point and stores them in the interference device database.
- Forwards spectrum data to Prime Infrastructure and the MSE.

Interference Types that Cisco CleanAir Can Detect

Cisco CleanAir can detect interference, report on the location and severity of the interference, and recommend different mitigation strategies. Two such mitigation strategies are persistent device avoidance and spectrum event-driven RRM.

Wi-Fi chip-based RF management systems share these characteristics:

- Any RF energy that cannot be identified as a Wi-Fi signal is reported as noise.
- Noise measurements that are used to assign a channel plan tend to be averaged over a period of time to avoid instability or rapid changes that can be disruptive to certain client devices.
- Averaging measurements reduces the resolution of the measurement. As such, a signal that disrupts clients might not look like it needs to be mitigated after averaging.
- All RF management systems available today are reactive in nature.

Cisco CleanAir is different and can positively identify not only the source of the noise but also its location and potential impact to a WLAN. Having this information allows you to consider the noise within the context of the network and make intelligent and, where possible, proactive decisions. For CleanAir, two types of interference events are common:

- Persistent interference
- Spontaneous interference

Persistent interference events are created by devices that are stationary in nature and have intermittent but largely repeatable patterns of interference. For example, consider the case of a microwave oven located in a break room. Such a device might be active for only 1 or 2 minutes at a time. When operating, however, it can be disruptive to the performance of the wireless network and associated clients. Using Cisco CleanAir, you can positively identify the device as a microwave oven rather than indiscriminate noise. You can also determine exactly which part of the band is affected by the device, and because you can locate it, you can understand

which access points are most severely affected. You can then use this information to direct RRM in selecting a channel plan that avoids this source of interference for the access points within its range. Because this interference is not active for a large portion of the day, existing RF management applications might attempt to again change the channels of the affected access points. Persistent device avoidance is unique, however, in that it remains in effect as long as the source of interference is periodically detected to refresh the persistent status. The Cisco CleanAir system knows that the microwave oven exists and includes it in all future planning. If you move either the microwave oven or the surrounding access points, the algorithm updates RRM automatically.



Note Spectrum event-driven RRM can be triggered only by Cisco CleanAir-enabled access points in local mode.

Spontaneous interference is interference that appears suddenly on a network, perhaps jamming a channel or a range of channels completely. The Cisco CleanAir spectrum event-driven RRM feature allows you to set a threshold for air quality (AQ) that, if exceeded, triggers an immediate channel change for the affected access point. Most RF management systems can avoid interference, but this information takes time to propagate through the system. Cisco CleanAir relies on AQ measurements to continuously evaluate the spectrum and can trigger a move within 30 seconds. For example, if an access point detects interference from a video camera, it can recover by changing channels within 30 seconds of the camera becoming active. Cisco CleanAir also identifies and locates the source of interference so that more permanent mitigation of the device can be performed at a later time.

In the case of Bluetooth devices, Cisco CleanAir-enabled access points can detect and report interferences only if the devices are actively transmitting. Bluetooth devices have extensive power save modes. For example, interference can be detected when data or voice is being streamed between the connected devices.

Persistent Devices

Some interference devices such as outdoor bridges and Microwave Ovens only transmit when needed. These devices can cause significant interference to the local WLAN due to short duration and periodic operation remain largely undetected by normal RF management metrics. With CleanAir the RRM DCA algorithm can detect, measure, register and remember the impact and adjust the DCA algorithm. This minimizes the use of channels affected by the persistent devices in the channel plan local to the interference source. Cisco CleanAir detects and stores the persistent device information in the Cisco WLC and this information is used to mitigate interfering channels.

Persistent Devices Detection

CleanAir-capable Monitor Mode access point collects information about persistent devices on all configured channels and stores the information in the Cisco WLC. Local/Bridge mode AP detects interference devices on the serving channels only.

Persistent Devices Propagation

Persistent device information that is detected by local or monitor mode access points is propagated to the neighboring access points connected to the same Cisco WLC to provide better chance of handling and avoiding persistent devices. Persistent device detected by the CleanAir-enabled access point is propagated to neighboring non-CleanAir access points, thus enhancing channel selection quality.

Detecting Interferers by an Access Point

When a CleanAir-enabled access point detects interference devices, detections of the same device from multiple sensors are merged together to create clusters. Each cluster is given a unique ID. Some devices conserve power by limiting the transmit time until actually needed which results in the spectrum sensor to temporarily stop detecting the device. This device is then correctly marked as down. A down device is correctly removed from the spectrum database. In cases when all the interferer detections for a specific devices are reported, the cluster ID is kept alive for an extended period of time to prevent possible device detection bouncing. If the same device is detected again, it is merged with the original cluster ID and the device detection history is preserved.

For example, some bluetooth headsets operate on battery power. These devices employ methods to reduce power consumption, such as turning off the transmitter when not actually needed. Such devices can appear to come and go from the classification. To manage these devices, CleanAir keeps the cluster IDs longer and they are remerged into a single record upon detection. This process smoothens the user records and accurately represents the device history.