



Aircell's internet service, Gogo, is being offered on American Airlines flights, but it does not permit web calls

# Surf in the sky, just don't make calls



American Airlines passenger Emmaline Allwood gets information on Aircell's inflight broadband internet service, Gogo, JFK Airport in New York.

**Joe Sharkey, New York**

"THE nice thing about a long-haul flight is you've got time to do a lot of different things," said Jack Blumenstein, the chief executive of Aircell.

True. You can read. You can watch the movie or, on a few airlines, enjoy live satellite television. You can work, eat, drink or sleep. And now, thanks to new technology by Aircell, you can get broadband Internet service on your laptop.

But one thing you may not do is use that Internet hookup for VoIP, the voice over Internet protocol services provided by companies like Skype. In other words, you may not use your newly empowered laptop connection in flight to make a voice phone call, even though the technological capability to do so is there.

Reflecting the continuing battles over cellphone use in other public settings, Aircell and American Airlines—so far

the only airline offering Aircell's in-flight Internet access, called Gogo—have erected technological barriers to block Skype and similar software programs from enabling voice calls in the insulated environment of the airplane cabin. American Airlines began offering Gogo last month.

Whether they ultimately succeed is open to question because, as Mr. Blumenstein acknowledges, the technological savvy are good at getting around barriers.

"Whenever you get an innovative group of people flying," he said, "you're going to have some people saying: 'Well, I know how to defeat that. I'm just going to go around the barn door.'"

For years, airlines and many of their passengers have expressed concern about the inevitability of in-flight cellphone capability, now that flight safety issues like the po-

tential for interference with avionics communications at cruising altitude are resolved.

But with little advance notice, the Aircell broadband service has brought the camel's nose into the tent. And while there are raging controversies about cellphone use on ground-based public transportation like trains and buses, imagine how much more intense the concern becomes in an airplane cabin, where passengers are confined, often for long hours, in close proximity, unable to flee.

Worried about the in-flight equivalent of road rage, airlines have been less than enthusiastic about any form of voice-call capability.

Jeff Gendel, who works in private equity, was e-mailing via his broadband connection last week on an American flight to Los Angeles from New York, where he lives. He said that before signing on, he

asked a Gogo customer agent on the flight about using Skype and was told that he had to limit himself to instant-messaging.

"The Internet and instant-message access is a huge and overdue step forward in travel productivity," he said, adding, "I think the jury is still out on phone conversations at 30,000 feet."

Blumenstein and others point out that there are no regulatory rules prohibiting VoIP use at 38,000 feet over the Great Plains. The objection and the ban are strictly over social concerns, he said. But if passengers are found using VoIP on Aircell's service, "we can exercise the right to turn your access off," Blumenstein said.

The idea of having legal voice-communications capabilities and not being able to use them does not sit well with many people. It's a hot topic on many technology blogs. So far, no airline has given the green light to voice calls. —NYT

# UK Church says sorry to Darwin

**Venkata Vemuri, London**

Charles Darwin will receive an apology from the Church of England 126 years after vilifying his theory that man descended from the apes. His descendants say the apology is meaningless now.

The move comes after Rev Professor Michael Reiss, a biologist director of education at the Royal Society, provoked a furore last week when he called for creationism—the Biblical theory of evolution—to be treated in school science lessons as a legitimate world view.

Darwin's theory scandalised the Victorian society in 1859. One of the most venomous clashes over his ideas took place in 1860 during a debate at Oxford University.

The Church of England will post the apology on the website later this Monday that will address Darwin directly: "Charles Darwin,

If it means that from now on the Church of England will say 'no' to the teaching of creationism in school science lessons, then we would accept the apology on Darwin's behalf.

—Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Association

200 years from your birth (in 1809), the Church of England owes you an apology for misunderstanding you and, by getting our first reaction wrong, encouraging others to misunderstand you still.

The article has been written by the Rev Dr Malcolm Brown, the director of mission and public affairs of the Archbishops' Council, the Church's managing body. —IANS

# Stolen cell phones can now call home

**Claire Cain Miller, New York**

Maverick Mobile Solutions, an Indian company that makes mobile applications, has a new way to protect your cell phone.

If your phone is lost or stolen, the application, called Maverick Secure Mobile, encrypts your data, sends you a text message with the location of the phone and, best of all, plays an annoyingly loud siren to torture the thief.

The application was unveiled at the DEMO technology conference in San Diego, Calif., this week, where it provided a few minutes of "comic relief," according to Dean Takahashi of VentureBeat.

The Maverick software is hidden on a phone, so a potential thief can't tell whether or not your phone has it. You give the company a second phone number—your spouse's or a friend's, for example.

As soon as a thief replaces your SIM card with his own, the phone encrypts all of your remaining data, like your phone book, photos or text

messages, so the thief can't see them. It also sends that data to your second phone so that you have it. With a feature called Spy Call, you can call your phone and eavesdrop on the thief's calls—without him knowing.

Then, when you get really exasperated, you can make the phone play a blaring siren. Just when he is about to toss your screaming phone in the trash, you can send him a text message with your name, location and, if you want, a reward for returning the phone.

Although the product is currently a beta, Maverick has a deal with Nokia to begin distributing the anti-theft application on Nokia phones, according to DEMO.

Maverick makes other mobile applications, games and content, including popular memory cards pre-loaded with games, applications and Bollywood films. The company suggests that its new anti-theft application could also be used by parents who want to track their kids. —NYT



# Taxi drivers have 'sat-nav system in brain'

**London:** A Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging scan has found evidence of an inbuilt 'sat-nav' system in the brains of London taxi drivers.

University College London scientists have used an fMRI scan to study the 'minute by minute' brain images of 20 taxi drivers as they navigated their way on 'virtual jobs'.

Their brain regions were activated as the drivers spotted familiar landmarks or thought about route options and their customers, BBC reported.

Earlier studies had shown that taxi drivers have a larger hippocampus and their brains 'grow on the job' as they gather detailed information useful in finding their way around the city.

"We were keen to go beyond brain structure and see what activity is going on inside the brains of taxi drivers while they are doing their


job," said Dr Hugo Spiers from University College London.

"We tried to peel out the common thoughts that taxi drivers tend to have as they drive through the city, and then tie them down to a particular time and place," he added.

The hippocampus of the drivers that participated in the study became active only when they planned their route at the outset, or if they had to completely change their destination during a journey. A different brain region became active when the drivers came across an unexpected situation like a blocked-off junction, and some changes occurred in regions that affect social behaviour.

Another part of the brain acted like a metal detector and became more active when the drivers were about to reach their respective destinations. —Agencies





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### Today, is the Last Date for Payment of

# Advance Tax

2nd instalment for companies and  
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IMPORTANT POINTS

e-payment (online tax payment) is mandatory from 1.04.2008 for


(a) All Corporates and  
(b) Other persons whose accounts are audited u/s 44 AB

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- Instant credit of tax
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- Instant receipt of acknowledgement
- Transaction ID reflected in your bank statement
- Online verification of credit of tax

Things to remember with regard to payment of Advance Tax

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- All the columns of the Challan must be filled up properly
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