

Vodafone Sure Signal review

Posted At : 16 March 2012 09:26 | Posted By : Shaun McCran
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A product I'd been vaguely aware of, but have since discovered a lot more about is the Vodafone Sure Signal box.

This little white box uses your home broadband to create a 3G bubble in your own home. It is basically a mini, private 3G mast.

The device itself is based on a technology called Femtocell. In layman's terms this provides a way of utilising your home broadband and converting it into a mobile network connection, IE 3G.

Out of the box

Out of the box the device is a smart, small white square. It is barely bigger than an A5 notebook, approximately 7inches square so it doesn't take up much room.

As you can see from the picture below there are very few connections on the device itself, making the setup a bit of a no-brain process. Plug in the power lead, plug the Ethernet lead directly into your router and you are done on the hardware front. If you don't have a router you can plug it directly into your home PC and share its internet connection directly.



The slightly more complicated part comes when you want to setup the software. You don't manage the device on any sort of management software layer, you have to login to the Vodafone website (www.vodafone.co.uk/suresignal) and manually add the mobile numbers you want to allow access to the sure signal box. It's easily done and you can add and remove users whenever you want.

Vodafone only

As indicated by the title of this article this is a Vodafone specific product.

During the user registration you have to specify Vodafone mobile number, and to login you have to have a Vodafone account so it is all tied in. That wasn't an issue for me as I have multiple Vodafone contracts (even my Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1 is now registered on the Sure Signal box) but if you are with a different mobile operator then you are out of luck. I read an article recently saying that O2 and Orange had previously investigated this sort of technology but no plans to roll out any comparable devices.

Conclusion

Setup was quick and easy, within twenty minutes everything was plugged in and working and the Sure Signal box had configured itself. There were no issues at all with getting it to work. My simple test to check that it was working was to enable and disable Wifi on my Galaxy Nexus mobile. With Wifi on the Sure Signal showed no connections to it, turn off Wifi and within a few seconds it shows network activity.

Mobile surfing is very snappy as well. I haven't run a speed test over the 3G signal yet but webpages load within a few second, and call quality is even and consistent. If anything its lost that slight crackle I was used to on three bars of reception.

There is a full description of Femtocell technology here: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Femtocell>

If you live in a rural connection or just generally have a mobile signal then this is definitely the device for you.

