

CLOUD ALLIANCE  
NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

RURAL BROADBAND BEGINS IN CENTRAL VERMONT

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\*\*\* Color images available upon request.

RURAL BROADBAND BEGINS IN CENTRAL VERMONT

PLAINFIELD, Vt. – High-speed Internet service is finally reaching rural parts of Plainfield, Marshfield, East Montpelier and Calais.

Cloud Alliance, a Vermont-based Internet provider, began wireless broadband service to sections of the four communities on Thursday. The long-awaited project, which will expand to include other towns in central Vermont, offers Internet access at more than ten-times the speed of dial-up service.

“Lightning-fast Internet access is at long last reaching our dirt roads and remote hillsides,” said Jake Marsh, co-founder of Cloud Alliance. “Thousands of Vermonters will soon be experiencing the Internet’s full potential.”

Thursday’s launch of the Internet service comes as many rural sections of Vermont struggle to keep pace with urbanized areas in the information age. Cloud Alliance’s service is wireless; it works by transmitting the broadband service over radio-frequency waves from a central location to homes and businesses across the region. The broadband signal is received using a small dish (like satellite television). No cell towers are required for a wireless Internet system.

The first customer installations are now underway. Early supporters of the project from the four communities, who agreed to pay for a year of service in advance, will be among the first subscribers. Cloud Alliance will gradually expand service to more customers in January. The coverage area will eventually reach Worcester, Middlesex, and beyond.

“Anyone interested in fast Internet service should register at our web site: [www.cloudalliance.com](http://www.cloudalliance.com),” said Tom Stillwell, a Cloud Alliance spokesman. “This allows us to determine if a home or business can pick up the wireless signal. And it helps us determine where to focus expansion efforts.”

Cloud Alliance includes among its partners Stowe-based PowerShift Online Services ([www.gopowershift.com](http://www.gopowershift.com)), which is expanding its array of broadband services, and Island Pond Wireless ([www.islandpondwireless.com](http://www.islandpondwireless.com)), which already offers high-speed wireless service in the Northeast Kingdom.

Thursday's service launch culminates a two-year effort by a citizen's group, the Marshfield-Plainfield Community Internet Project. With support from the selectboards in the two towns, the group recruited Cloud Alliance after a competitive bidding process. The effort soon grew to other nearby central Vermont communities.

"We couldn't wait for the politicians and the huge telecommunications companies to bring us broadband service," said Michael Birnbaum, a member of the Marshfield-Plainfield group. "So we engineered a home-grown solution."

"We're tired of being told by other companies that we can't have broadband access in certain parts of town," said Scott Bassage of Calais.

The expansion of broadband service to many rural places has proven difficult. Many telephone and cable Internet companies won't serve rural areas because of low population densities. So Plainfield and Marshfield, working with Cloud Alliance, solicited broad support for the project.

Washington Electric Cooperative has agreed to guarantee, or back, half the value of a \$50,000 loan from Community Capital of Central Vermont, a non-profit lending arm of the Central Vermont Community Action Council. WEC will also administer a \$50,000 grant toward the project from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, which was passed through the Montpelier-based Vermont Broadband Council.

"This project would not have been possible without all the support we've seen from the community," said Tom Joyce, Cloud Alliance co-founder. "We can proudly say that central Vermont is headed towards a brighter and more technologically advanced future."

Bill Powell, WEC's director of products and services, describes the project as "a great opportunity to help our membership in these towns gain high-speed Internet access for the first time."

For more information about Cloud Alliance high-speed wireless Internet visit [www.cloudalliance.com](http://www.cloudalliance.com) or to sign up for service call 1-877-823-8631.

## **BACKGROUND RELEASE: CLOUD ALLIANCE**

Cloud Alliance, a Vermonter-owned company, was created in the summer of 2004 to specifically address the need for rural broadband in Vermont and New Hampshire. The company is made up of several key figures from the local Internet and telecommunications industry, with direct ties to Power Shift Online Services and Island Pond Wireless.

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### **History**

Technology is moving forward, but Northern Vermont and New Hampshire are staying behind. Over 200,000 households and 10,000 businesses reside in this 6,000 square mile area with the majority only receiving electricity and basic telephone service on copper lines. It's an area with no advanced computer delivery system; unfortunately the expense and disruption of wire-based systems is not justifiable in these rural parts.

Large national cable and phone corporations offer service only to the most populated and profitable areas, leaving outlying locations without service. Jake Marsh, now Chief Technical Officer of Cloud Alliance, is the owner of Island Pond Wireless. In Island Pond and Westmore, Jake was able to successfully deliver a profitable local wireless Internet system and he realized that a much larger market existed for his services.

Around the same time Tom Joyce, a former telecommunications professional, was working with Dirigo Paper Mill in Gilman, Vermont. The mill needed high-speed communications to help it stay in business, but there was no high-speed infrastructure. The only option available at the time was to run a T1 line that cost ten times more than typical population centers pay. The challenge led Tom to speak with SBDC and the Vermont State Office of Telecommunication. Eventually he was put in touch with Jake Marsh.

In the summer of 2004, Jake and Tom met and began to discuss the potential in satisfying the unmet demand for high-speed Internet service all across rural Vermont and New Hampshire. Together, they envisioned an integrated wireless infrastructure and a new company that would deliver service to rural customers. To implement this solution they joined forces and formed Cloud Alliance.

“We do think of ourselves as the dirt road wireless crowd” says Tom. “We and our partners have been quietly building a rural wireless high-speed Internet infrastructure where large corporations will not. We’ve been procuring capital in order to fund this infrastructure. The services provided by Cloud Alliance, such as high-speed wireless Internet access, wireless “hotspots”, and other related services will provide rural Vermont and New Hampshire with unprecedented business opportunities, and yet also help preserve the beauty of the rural landscape we love so much.”

During the summer of 2005 Joe Allen, owner of Power Shift Online Services, saw the potential in Cloud Alliance and decided to join Jake and Tom in helping to build the company. He became the third partner in the business and brought a world of experience and support from his own background providing Internet services.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What does it cost and what are the service options?**

Basic residential service costs \$39.99 per month plus installation, while “Power User” service is \$49.99. Residential service includes five e-mail addresses and up to five mega-bytes of web space. Basic business service called “SOHO” starts at \$69.99 per month while the more powerful packages “Premium” and “Enterprise” run at \$79.99 and \$89.99 respectively plus installation. Business accounts include ten e-mail addresses and up to ten mega-bytes of web space.

### **Where is it available?**

The Plainfield base station will be capable of serving parts of Plainfield, Marshfield, Calais, and East Montpelier. Service availability will be limited at first because the base station requires a line of site view to the receiver in order to transmit a signal. Often times the signal can pass through tree lines without a problem; however residents tucked away behind a hill may be out of reach until after further expansion efforts are complete. All interested parties are strongly encouraged to submit their 911 address to Cloud Alliance for review. This can be done, preferably from the web site ([www.CloudAlliance.com](http://www.CloudAlliance.com)), but also by calling 1-877-823-8631. This allows Cloud Alliance to confirm your reception status, or for those located outside the coverage area it tells us where to concentrate our expansion efforts.

### **How does high-speed wireless Internet work?**

Wireless Internet access works much like its wired counterpart, only the data transmission occurs over the airwaves using unlicensed spectrum (unlike cellular networks, which use licensed spectrum). Signals come in to an Internet service provider via a land line capable of ultra-high data transmission speeds. That Internet service provider then broadcasts and receives signals through a series of stations placed throughout a community. These stations pass on the signal, or broadcast directly to homes and businesses in the coverage area.

### **What needs to be installed on my home to receive the signal and get service?**

You receive the signal with a small dish (like satellite television). Cable carries the signal inside where were you can then access the Internet directly, at incredible speeds!

### **Is this like cable modem or DSL?**

Most of these services are not available in much of our service areas. Cable modem and DSL are all dependent on physical wires, and a middle man (i.e. Phone Company). With Cloud Alliance, there are no wires, and you deal directly with us. Cloud Alliance wireless data transmission rates are comparable to cable modem and faster than DSL.

### **Is this the same as “satellite” Internet?**

No, Cloud Alliance wireless Internet service doesn’t use satellite signals. The major disadvantage of satellite Internet is slow upload speeds and the latency (delay time) due to use of satellites in geosynchronous orbit 23,000 miles away.

### **Do I need to keep my AOL/MSN/Earthlink account?**

No, Cloud Alliance is your ISP (Internet Service Provider) and replaces AOL, MSN, and Earthlink as your ISP. If you keep any of these other services, you will be paying for services you cannot use and which may create technical problems with your system.

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