Speeding Through Wireless Standards

TUTORIAL

Tektronix®

Compliance Testing and Certification – is it worth my time?

You have been tasked with adding wireless to the latest generation of products your company manufactures. There are a number of technologies to choose from, including standards such as Wi-Fi®, Bluetooth®, ZigBee®. Wireless technologies are adopted as standards in order to ensure products can interoperate within the ecosystem where they will be deployed. And in order to release the product to the marketplace, the product will not only need to meet regulatory certification as defined per the country where it will be sold but also qualification as defined per the standard selected. The aim of the standard qualification (such as Bluetooth) is to deliver a seamless user experience throughout the vast number of Bluetooth devices that are available in the market. Failing either certification or qualification can mean design turns that will delay the final product release and draw additional significant development cost.

What does Standard Qualification/ Certification mean?

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Qualification in this tutorial is the term used to describe what tests a product is required to pass so it meets a wireless standard. Qualification provides insurance the product will interoperate with other devices using the same wireless standard. Bluetooth products have to be qualified before getting the Bluetooth Logo. Wi-Fi products need to be certified before getting the Wi-Fi logo. Not all test houses have been selected to dispense the standard qualification tests. The Bluetooth Special Interest Group (SIG) and the Wi-Fi Alliance publishes the approved test houses. Going through standard qualification tests can range in $10 to 15,000 in a test house (assuming you pass the first time). This test house may not be so close to your location, so travel may be required. This tutorial will explain why it is recommended to perform some of the qualification test prior to going to the test house.

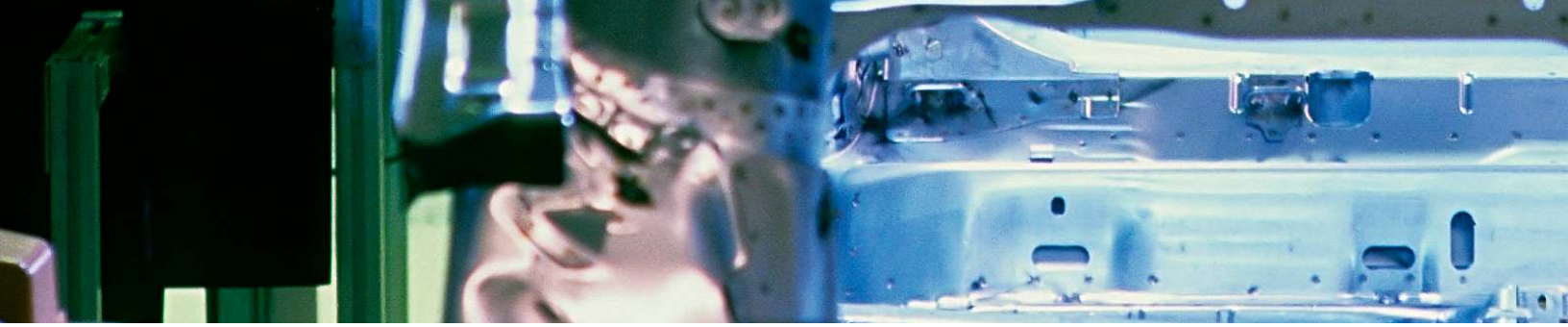
Some vendors also use Compliance or Compatibility terminology to say Qualification.

Now assuming the volume of your product is small enough, you may have opted to buy and integrate a wireless module, rather than create your own custom wireless design. However there is a flurry of different modules and the module providers are not always very clear at communicating to what level these modules have been pre-qualified and pre-certified. So what do you need to put in your test plan? This Tutorial is designed to help you decide what to include in your test plan so that you ensure the product will pass regulatory certification and standard qualification. This guide will explain why pre-compliance testing for the wireless standard selected is needed. **>>**

What does Regulatory Certification/ Compliance mean?

Certification is the term used in this tutorial to describe this critical step to bring a wireless enabled product to market. Certification allows the product to be sold in a particular country, because it meets the country regulatory rules. Certification is to be obtained in a test house that has been selected by the local authorities. The certification rules are twofold. First general emissions testing rules that nearly every electronic product must meet, secondly intentional radiation testing rules that only products design to transmit data wirelessly must comply with. The rules may vary within a country depending on the frequency range and the type of intentional emission (for ex. hopping or not). The rules may differ from countries to countries too. Going through the regulatory emission tests can range from $10 to 15,000 per country in a test house assuming you pass the first time. The tests required are discussed in the "Don't Let EMI Compliance Impact Your Time to Market" Tutorial.

"Failing either certification or qualification can mean design turns that will delay the final product release"



"The test equipment used for pre-compliance doesn't have to be expensive."

Do you know the different kinds of antennas used for low power wireless field?
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The "whip" antenna is the basic one. It can be inserted on a PCB as a trace, a stub or a coil. The newest types of antenna are called Chip antenna that are surface mounted. It is also possible to use a loop although they tend to have poor gain. What is key to remember is that, regardless of the choice of antenna, any changes in nearby materials or dimensions can affect the antenna performance and make your end-product wirelessly unusable. Also fast digital switching circuitry close to the antenna may create noise that will cause interferences and reduce the receiving performance of your end-product

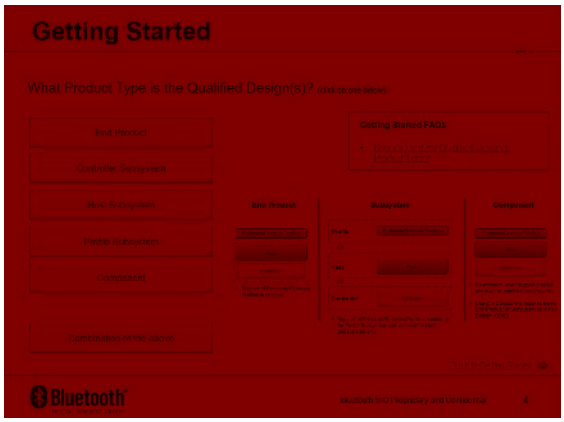
Pre-certified modules come with a lot of constraints, if you want to leverage the value of the pre-certification; especially you cannot make any changes to the antenna, or any changes to the RF path at the physical layer, as presented by the reference design. This is true for all modules even Wi-Fi, Bluetooth or Zigbee modules.

You will also need to ensure that your device is not failing intentional radiation testing rules for the countries where the end-product will be marketed. More on this testing can be found in the ***Don't Let EMI Compliance Impact Your Time to Market*** article at Tek.com/IoT. You will need to perform pre-certification with some test equipment, that can also be reused for your wireless pre-qualification testing. This test equipment doesn't have to be expensive.

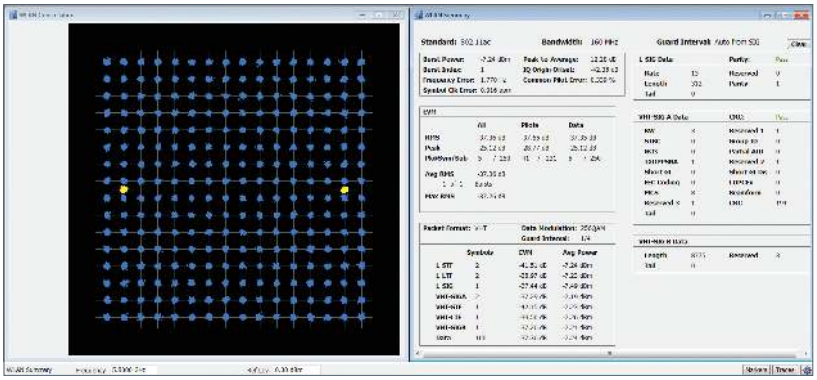
Qualification with the standard is also something you need to worry about, even if the module has been qualified. Let's take a closer look at what Bluetooth Qualification is about:

Products need to go through Bluetooth qualification to be granted the Bluetooth Logo before being released. Bluetooth Special Interest Group (SIG) has defined its qualification process exhaustively. ***The aim of the Bluetooth SIG qualification is to deliver a seamless user experience throughout all Bluetooth devices that are likely to interoperate***, e.g. making sure you can readily connect your smart phone with the Bluetooth hands-free feature available in your car.

Qualified Bluetooth products can be modules too. Module vendors get the module reference designs qualified. You may have used these qualified reference designs to prototype your end-product. However, this is not sufficient to automatically qualify your product per Bluetooth SIG definition. For example, if the reference design was not strictly followed or the Bluetooth profiles were changed, the product will need to go through the complete qualification process. Also, if the RF circuitry on the product's PCB is not "similar enough" to the reference design, and required a new controller subsystem to be created, then the RF-PHY tests of the qualification will be needed. Test procedures and requirements can be found on the Bluetooth SIG website (www.bluetooth.org/en-us/test-qualification), once you become a member of the Bluetooth SIG. **>>**



Bluetooth SIG presentation shows what Product Type is the Qualified Design.

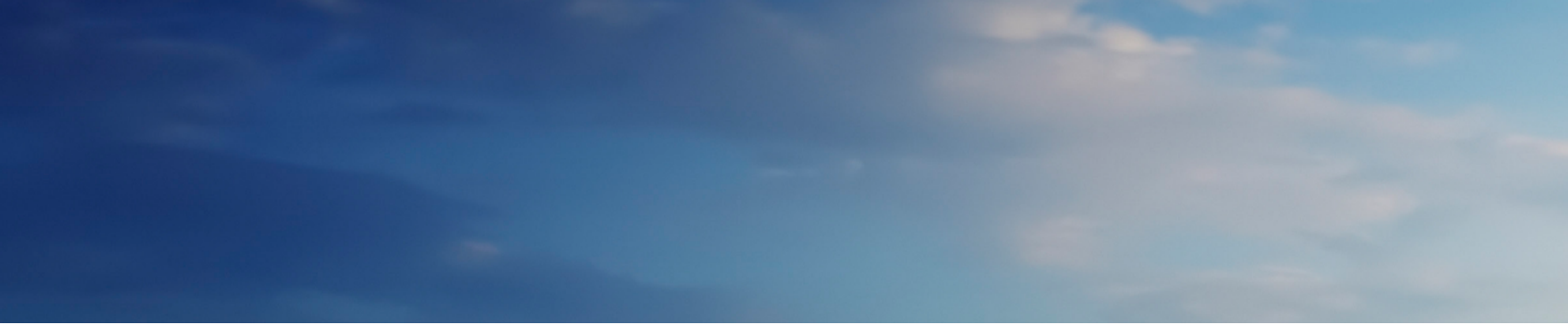


Picture of a constellation diagram for WLAN 802.11ac and EVM measurement results

Let’s now consider Wi-Fi certification per the Wi-Fi Alliance. In order to use the "Wi-Fi Certified" logo on the product, your company will need to become a member of the Wi-Fi Alliance; “Certification” consists of the technical process in which members submit their product for certification testing at Wi-Fi Alliance’s designated certification testing facility. These tests include verifying whether the radio in the product meets the specifications defined by the IEEE 802.11 standard committee. To perform the tests, the radio is put in direct transmit mode and run the different WLAN 802.11 modes and emitting channels. At the physical layer, the radio output power is measured, and other measurements such as specific emission shape and error vector measurements are performed.

Type of Measurement	Measurement	DSSS	"b"	"a"	"g"	"n"	"ac"	IEEE Standard Limit
Transmit Power Measurements	Transmit power	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES		country dependent
	Transmit Power On/Off Ramp	YES	YES					(10%-90%) 2 usec
Transmit Spectral Measurements	Transmit Spectrum mask	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	Std mask
	RF Carrier suppression	YES	YES					-15dB
	Center frequency leakage			YES		20MHz		-15 dBc or +2 dB w.r.t. average subcarrier power
						40MHz		-20 dBc or 0 dB w.r.t. average subcarrier power
	Transmit Spectral flatness			YES		YES	YES	+/- 4 dB, +4/-6 dB (various BWs, 20-160 MHz)
	Transmission spurious			YES				country dependent
	Out-of-band spurious emission	YES	YES	YES	YES			country dependent
Transmit Frequency Measurements	Transmit Center frequency tolerance	YES	YES		YES			+/-25 ppm (DSSS,b,g)
				YES				+/-20 ppm (20 MHz and 10 MHz), +/-10 ppm (5 MHz)
						YES	YES	+/-20 ppm (5 GHz band), +/-25 ppm (2.4 GHz band)
	Symbol clock frequency tolerance	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	+/-20 ppm (5 GHz band), +/-25 ppm (2.4 GHz band)
Transmit Modulation Measurements	Transmit Modulation accuracy	YES						Peak EVM < 0.35%
			YES					Peak EVM < 0.36%
	Transmitter Constellation Error							
	Modulation Type	**Coding rate**	Limits in dB					
	BPSK	1/2			-5		-5	-5
	BPSK	3/4			-8			
	QPSK	1/2			-10		-10	-10
	QPSK	3/4			-13		-13	-13
	16-QAM	1/2			-16		-16	-16
	16-QAM	3/4			-19		-19	-19
	64-QAM	2/3			-22		-22	-22
	64-QAM	3/4			-25		-25	-25
	64-QAM	5/6					-27	-27
	256-QAM	3/4						-30
	256-QAM	5/6						-32

List of WLAN 802.11 compliance measurements



Pre-testing for standard qualification is a cost-effective way to catch problems early, while there is time to correct issues without costly redesigns, delays, and retesting at the test house.

Pre-certification or pre-qualification are also called pre-compliance because it encompasses measurements required for both certification and qualification.

Pre-compliance doesn't have to be an expensive nor a long process. It is important though that it is exhaustive to ensure the end-product doesn't fail certification or qualification, and also that it communicates to its ecosystem as planned. Pre-compliance testing is also needed to confirm that as the end-product ages and is used in rough conditions, its wireless communication is still fully operational.

Bluetooth Low Energy measurements to pass before going to the test house

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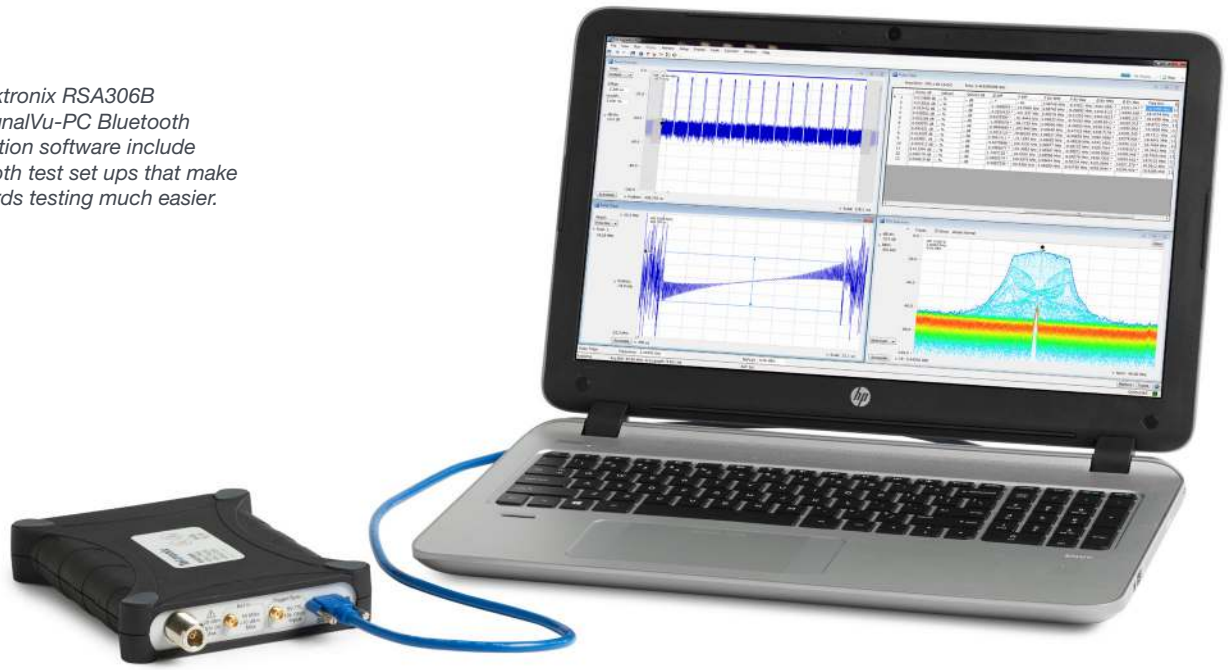
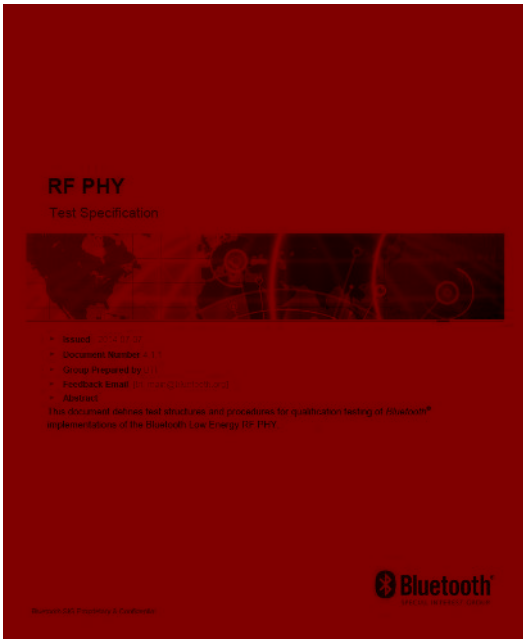
- *In-band Emission*
- *Modulation Characteristics*
  - *Δf1 frequency deviation average for a test pattern "1111000"*
  - *Δf2 frequency deviation average for a test pattern "10101010"*
  - *Δf2 avg / Δf1 avg*



The Tektronix RSA306B and SignalVu-PC Bluetooth application software include Bluetooth test set ups that make standards testing much easier.

The required tests can be easy to perform when the pre-compliance analysis software that is usually an add-on to the basic feature of the test equipment, actually helps with configuring the instrument. That way you don't have to remember how to do it again, if your device failed at the test house or later when you will test your next wireless product. In order to test wireless standards, you will need a spectrum analyzer that has vector signal analysis capability. The latest generation of such spectrum analyzer is USB–based, very affordable, easy to operate and portable. The pre-compliance analysis software typically uses the data acquired by the Spectrum Analyzer and run on a PC or tablet. **>>**



Test specification provided by Bluetooth SIG.

The Wi-Fi or WLAN, Bluetooth or ZigBee pre-compliance software that runs on a spectrum analyzer will get you ready for certification and for qualification at the physical layer in no time. Note that qualification may also involve upper layer testing such as MAC, Link, and Transport layers if you design new wireless functionality. Tests to be performed are usually defined by the standards.

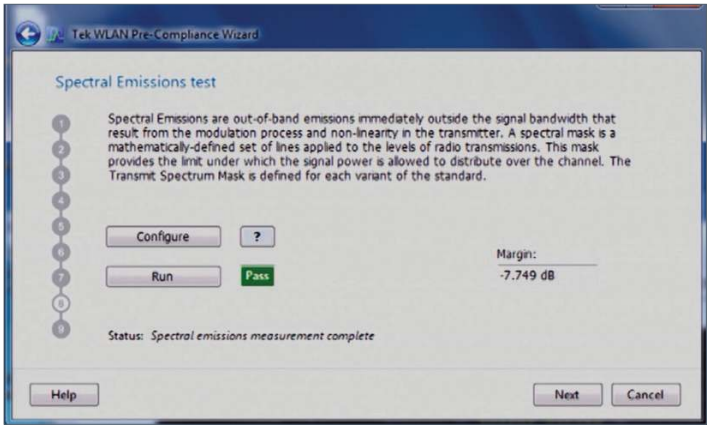
"A portable USB spectrum analyzer that captures signals in real–time is also very handy in the field."

“Standard pre-compliance measurements that are easy to set-up, and graphically report pass/fail results will be a huge time saver.”

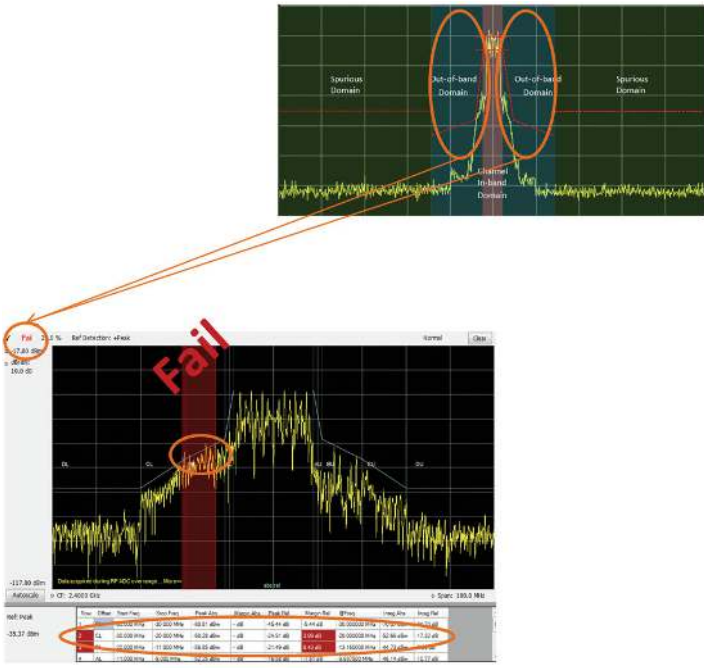
As most wireless standards are using digital modulation techniques to encode the transmitted data, modulation fidelity such as Error Vector Magnitude or Frequency Deviation have become required measurement in addition to typical power and spectrum emission tests with pre-defined masks. Measurements that are easy to set-up and graphically report pass/fail results will be a huge time saver. Tektronix has developed a Wizard to ease the whole process of WLAN pre-compliance with a true push-button approach. And the Tektronix RSA306B Real Time Spectrum Analyzer can also be set up through Signal Vu-PC software to run push-buttoned tests and graphically report pass/fail results.

Later, once the device you worked on has been released and deployed, you may still need to debug it, probably in the field. By comparing the lab testing results to what you measure in the field, you can accelerate the whole debug process later.

A strong pre-compliance testing plan can save you time, money, and your own frustration. The test equipment doesn’t have to be expensive, and a lot can be accomplished with the right spectrum analyzer and supporting software. Later, when you need to support the deployment of the product you designed, then a portable USB spectrum analyzer that captures signals in real-time is also very handy in the field. You will be able to compare the results you see in the field to what you actually measured in the lab. The real-time capability of Tektronix RSA306B will also help when you look at capturing the RF noise around the product as you try to understand what is going on. For learning more about capturing interference and noise, please read the “Interference of Things” tutorial.



WLAN Wizard and SignalVu-PC makes WLAN testing possible with the click of a few buttons.



Easy to read graphical outputs make the problems obvious so that you can spend more time building your device and less time searching.

References

- ***Bluetooth Poster***
  tek.com/bluetooth
- ***WLAN Primer***
  tek.com/wifi
- ***WLAN Poster***
  tek.com/wifi
- ***WLAN Pre-compliance Testing Application Note***
  tek.com/wifi

Contact Information:

Australia 1 800 709 465
Austria 00800 2255 4835
Balkans, Israel, South Africa and other ISE Countries +41 52 675 3777
Belgium 00800 2255 4835
Brazil +55 (11) 3759 7627
Canada 1 800 833 9200
Central East Europe / Baltics +41 52 675 3777
Central Europe / Greece +41 52 675 3777
Denmark +45 80 88 1401
Finland +41 52 675 3777
France 00800 2255 4835
Germany 00800 2255 4835
Hong Kong 400 820 5835
India 000 800 650 1835
Indonesia 007 803 601 5249
Italy 00800 2255 4835
Japan 81 (3) 6714 3010
Luxembourg +41 52 675 3777
Malaysia 1 800 22 55835
Mexico, Central/South America and Caribbean 52 (55) 56 04 50 90
Middle East, Asia, and North Africa +41 52 675 3777
The Netherlands 00800 2255 4835
New Zealand 0800 800 238
Norway 800 16098
People's Republic of China 400 820 5835
Philippines 1 800 1601 0077
Poland +41 52 675 3777
Portugal 80 08 12370
Republic of Korea +82 2 6917 5000
Russia / CIS +7 (495) 6647564
Singapore 800 6011 473
South Africa +41 52 675 3777
Spain 00800 2255 4835
Sweden 00800 2255 4835
Switzerland 00800 2255 4835
Taiwan 886 (2) 2656 6688
Thailand 1 800 011 931
United Kingdom / Ireland 00800 2255 4835
USA 1 800 833 9200
Vietnam 12060128

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