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IEEE P802.11

Wireless Access Method and Physical Layer Specification

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Response to Question on Infrared PHY CCA

by  
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The energy detection mechanism is meant to detect the presence of other sources of infrared interference such as non-802.11 PHY's. In this case CCA is indicated as BUSY but only during a period defined in section 12.3.5.1. This explains why the energy detect level is lower than receiver sensitivity.

Detection of 802.11 infrared PHY's is indicated by the CARRIER DETECT SIGNAL at a minimum signal level equal to the receiver sensitivity.