

# Washington Research Institute sues manufacturers over Bluetooth patent

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The Associated Press

Three major electronics companies have been sued by a foundation which claims that their use of Bluetooth wireless technology infringes on patented work at the University of Washington.

The case was filed in U.S. District Court against Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. of Japan, Samsung Electronics Co. of South Korea and Nokia Corp. of Finland by the Washington Research Institute, a nonprofit group that seeks commercial uses for patented technology developed at the state's public universities and enforces the patents.

Matsushita, parent company of Panasonic, and Samsung produce a wide range of electronics products, while Nokia is the world's largest manufacturer of cellular telephones.

Bluetooth involves the use of a radio frequency for short-range wireless exchanges of data between cellphones, computers, headsets and other devices.

According to the lawsuit filed Dec. 21, Bluetooth-based computers, cellphones and headsets made by the three companies have violated four patents, including one that was issued for research done in the mid-1990s by Edwin Suominen when he was an undergraduate student at Washington. All four patents are now held by the foundation.

"That's what's unusual about it," John D. Reagh, the foundation's manager of business development and legal affairs, told the Seattle Times. "We manage a number of patents for the university, and I can't think of another one where the inventor wasn't a PhD."

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages. Any damages that are received will go to the University of Washington with a portion earmarked for Suominen, who is serving as a technical adviser in the case, Reagh said.

The court filing followed three years of fruitless informal attempts to resolve the issue, said Michael Lisa, the foundation's principal lawyer.

"We will not refuse reasonable settlements, but if we don't get an offer to do so, we are going to trial," Lisa said, according to a report in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

Nokia officials, following longstanding policy, would not comment on the lawsuit early Wednesday. A Samsung representative acknowledged that the lawsuit had been filed but would not comment further. No one answered a telephone call to Matsushita after business hours.

Lisa said the three companies could argue that they are not violating the patents, sign a licence and begin paying royalties, or buy Bluetooth chip sets from Broadcom Corp. of Irvine, Calif., the only chip manufacturer that has licensed the technology. The three manufacturers use chip sets made by CSR PLC of Cambridge, England, which has not licensed the disputed technology.

The case is Washington Research Foundation v. Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., No. C06-1813.