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How the first Apple HomeKit products will work

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IMAGE: MASHABLE COMPOSITE

BY SAMANTHA MURPHY KELLY
18 MINUTES AGO

The first collection of [Apple HomeKit](#)-compatible products were quietly announced last week at the [2015 International CES](#) in Las Vegas, and we saw everything from smart plugs and sensors to garage door openers and locks.

There's nothing too sexy about those types of appliances, but we were able to learn more about how Apple HomeKit and its vision for the smart home will work.

SEE ALSO: [This is your future smart home — and no, it doesn't look like 'The Jetsons'](#)

Although there been some [reports](#) indicating Apple TV is shaping up to be the hub of the home, similar to how Google is positioning the [Nest](#) smart thermostat to be the control center, this isn't entirely the case.

All of the HomeKit products work with Apple TV when it comes to using Siri remotely (like asking your phone to dim the lights while you're at the office), but you don't need an Apple TV to use Siri to control devices at home on the Wi-Fi network there. And you don't need an Apple TV if you want to control those devices remotely via an app — only if you want to use voice command.

Another main takeaway we can learn from the launch of the new products is that

HomeKit is just a framework that makes sure everything works together, without (as of now) a master hub or a control center app, à la [Apple Health](#). HomeKit streamlines the communication between the iPhone and a home device.

Let's take a closer look by narrowing in on one of the new products. Grid Connect's [ConnectSense Smart Outlet](#) (\$79) turns existing products in the house like lamps, older game consoles and dishwashers into smart appliances, so you don't have to replace whatever your devices if you want to control them over the Internet.



IMAGE: GRIDCONNECT

By plugging these things into the outlet, users can control them via an iPhone or use Siri to do so. For example, you can program the app to understand “Goodnight, home,” which would automatically dim the lights, turn off the PlayStation and lower the temperature in rooms you're not using.

Adam Justice, VP of Grid Connect, said the company decided to work with HomeKit first before launching on other smart platforms for several reasons.

"First what's really appealing is there's an easy set up for consumers — they can get started on an iPhone or iPad in just a few steps," Justice said. "There is also an Apple wireless accessory configuration so people don't have to grab a sticky note with the Wi-Fi password on it and there's also voice control."

Justice added that Apple's security measures were one of the top selling points to build its new product for HomeKit: "It has end-to-end encryption, so you don't have to worry about someone hacking into the system."

Unlike Apple's HealthKit platform, there aren't plans to have an app act as the control center on iOS devices, according to sources close to the matter. In ConnectSense's case, users will have that app to work with the lights and other things around the house.

"When you buy a HomeKit product, you're purchasing the product and the interoperability between products rather than having to buy just one brand," Justice said. "You can get a garage door opener from one company and a smart lock from another. Everything works together."

Other HomeKit-compatible products that made a debut at CES include Chamberlain's [MyQ Smart Garage](#), [Elgato's smart sensors](#), Insteon's [Insteon Hub](#), [iHome's iSP5 SmartPlug](#), [iDevices' Connected Plug](#) and [Schlage's Sense smart lock](#). All of these devices work with an iPhone and run on the Apple technology working in the background.

These devices all indeed work with Apple TV and Siri too, but only in a limited way for now. As mentioned, a user only needs an Apple TV for remote voice control via Siri (non-voice control directly through the product's app still works). But when at home on the same Wi-Fi network as the device, you don't need the Apple TV to use voice commands — HomeKit can identify your iCloud credentials to know a Siri request is coming in.

None of the HomeKit-compatible products unveiled at CES are for sale right now, so Apple's smart home platform technically still hasn't launched. We don't know which item will be the first — most anticipate a spring arrival — but all say "soon."

So we're likely just a few months away before we can see what Apple HomeKit and its new smart home partners can really do — and [if it will impact our lives](#) as much as many suspect.

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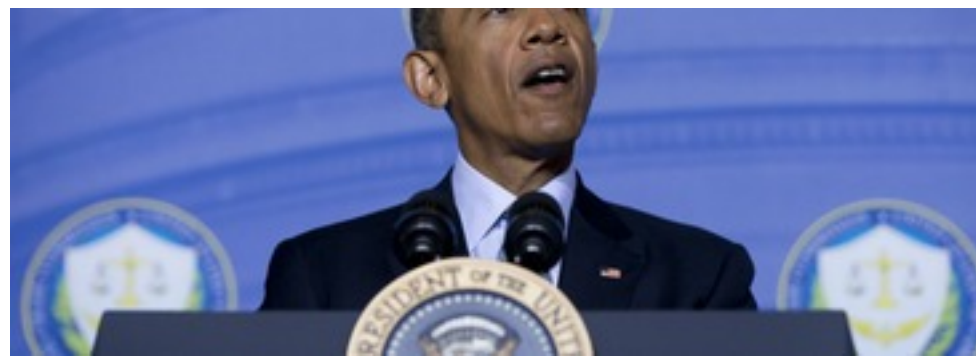
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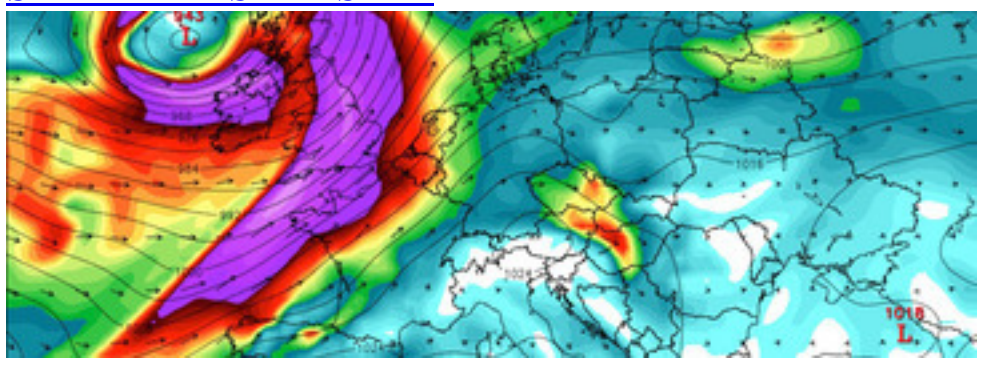
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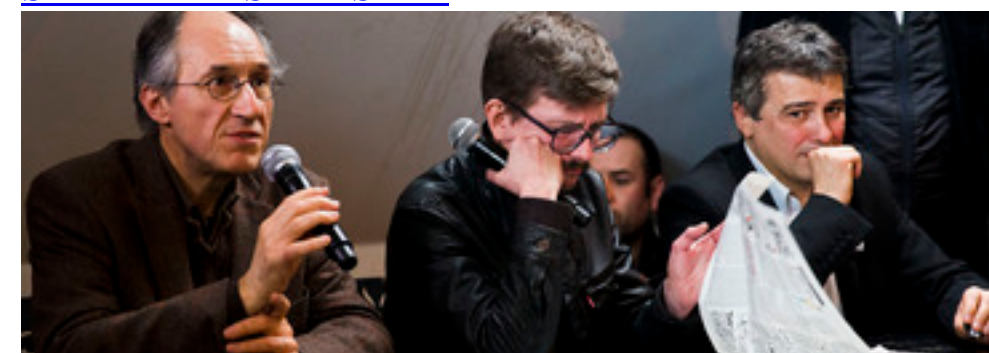
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