

Lowe's muscles into smart home

by [Martin LaMonica](#) January 5, 2012 7:49 AM PST



The Lowe's application, run by U.K.-based AlertMe, will let people control home energy and security systems from a PC, tablet, or smart phone.

(Credit: AlertMe)

Do-it-yourself retailer Lowe's later this year will sell three home automation kits designed to plug thermostats and home security gear into a home network.

The company today announced a deal with U.K.-based AlertMe which will provide the equipment and a cloud-based service, called Iris, for home energy management, automation, and monitoring.

The products will be available mid year and be priced for the "mass market," said Kevin Meagher, the vice president and general manager for smart home at Lowe's. All three kits will be self-installable and can be accessed from Internet-connected devices, such as PCs, smart phones, and [tablets](#).

With them, consumers will be able to remotely monitor and control devices in the home, including heating and cooling, home alarm systems, security cameras, or appliances.

Lowe's expects the combination of energy savings through a programmable thermostat and convenience through remote control will attract consumers, Meagher said. A person could, for example, turn on the air conditioner on the way home from work. The system could also automatically change a thermostat setting to "away" when a person arms home security remotely, he said.

The technology to link multiple devices in a home into a network is becoming more accessible, which is leading to many new products. Lowe's decided to work with AlertMe because it provides a system for integrating multiple devices controllable from a single application. Over time, all manner of items that Lowe's sells, including humidifiers and light fixtures, will be Internet enabled so Lowe's needs to be prepared, Meagher said.

"We think there's a real danger the whole market could stall if we just let all our manufacturing partners stick things on the shelves without considering the broader interests," he said. "Consumers stand to get confused by the technology and lose the real benefits."

The base AlertMe system will include a wireless thermostat, smart plugs, and a small network hub. The full kit will also have security related gear, including a wireless front door lock and motion detection system. They will work over Wi-Fi, Zigbee, and Z-Wave wireless protocols.

In the U.K., AlertMe charges a monthly fee for its service. Meagher said it'd be likely that there will be online component that consumers don't pay for. The Web site will be a Lowe's branded site.

Lowe's entry into smart home and energy management follows [Best Buy which last fall launched home energy zones](#) in three pilot stores to demonstrate to consumers a suite of products it's offering, which includes GE's Nucleus system and [Nest Labs' Learning Thermostat](#).