The Wi-Fi we use every day runs on unlicensed spectrum. Wi-Fi - and other technologies that use unlicensed spectrum - has a “politeness protocol,” which means it waits and listens for the band to be clear and will back off if it senses interference from another user.

If unlicensed spectrum bands were an escalator, their Wi-Fi and other unlicensed spectrum passengers would follow common courtesies such as standing to the right to allow those walking to pass on the left and allowing enough space between riders.

Pre-standards LTE-U – the ability to use 4G LTE wireless technology in unlicensed spectrum – has no listen-and-wait protocols. Some worry that such “rude” technology would render unlicensed spectrum bands unusable.

If pre-standards LTE-U were to use the escalator, it would crowd out other passengers, standing on the wrong side, stopping at the bottom and blocking the way with luggage.