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## CES: Hitachi plans big boost for small drives

**Hitachi Global Storage Technologies said this week that it plans to at least double the capacity of its 1-in. Microdrive hard disk drive this year. The announcement was timed for this week's International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas.**

The small drives are finding favor in a growing number of portable devices, such as digital music players, and the greater capacity coupled with a reduction in the space the drives need should help device makers keep multimedia devices small and feature-rich.

Currently, Hitachi's most capacious Microdrive can hold 4GB of data; The new drives, due in the second half of the year, will be able to hold 8GB to 10GB, said Bill Healy, senior vice president of product strategy and marketing at San Jose-based Hitachi Global Storage.

In addition to offering more storage space, the drives will occupy about 20% less volume than current models, said Healy. One of the biggest space savings will come from replacing the Compact Flash interface with a zero insertion force (ZIF) connector favored by consumer electronics makers.

Beyond offering more storage capacity, the drives could also end up in devices other than those in which they are now used. At present, any device that has to have more than about 5GB of storage requires a larger 1.8-in. drive. The benefits of being able to use a smaller drive are obvious in Apple Computer Inc.'s iPod and iPod Mini. The former uses a 1.8-in. drive; the latter uses a 1-in. drive.

In the same market segment, one of Hitachi's competitors, Longmont, Colo.-based Cornice Inc., is using CES to announce plans for a 3GB version of its 1-in. drive. That product is due out in the early part of this year.

Hitachi will also employ similar space-saving techniques to its 1.8-in. drive family, said Healy.

New versions of 1.8-in. drives, also expected in the second half of this year, will feature ZIF connectors. A drive with one platter will offer 30GB to 40GB of capacity, and one with a double platter will have double that capacity, said Healy. The drives will also offer better shock resistance, he said..

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