

Comcast sets \$8 rate hike for most internet, cable TV packages



Typical rates are going up \$5 a month – plus an additional \$3 a month in broadcast and sports fees for the majority of cable TV subscribers. (Mike Rogoway/The Oregonian)



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Comcast will raise rates on many Oregon cable TV and internet plans by \$5 a month in October, and boost additional fees most subscribers pay for sports and local channels by as much as 50 percent. That adds another \$3 to most monthly TV bills.

The Northwest's largest cable TV company has 600,000 subscribers in Oregon and Southwest Washington. Comcast's rate hikes come in the context of growing competition from online services that offer many channels without a subscription, and from local providers CenturyLink and Frontier Communications.

Comcast, meanwhile, has **steadily upped its own internet speeds**, dramatically improved its cable TV box, and Comcast SportsNet Northwest **just signed a new contract** to carry every Portland Trail Blazers game.

None of that has had an appreciable impact on Comcast's share of the Portland market, nor its pricing. Nationally, the company said its prices are going up by about 3.9 percent this year, which is nearly five times **the rate of inflation** but in line with past Comcast rate hikes.



"Unfortunately, the cost to deliver programming continues to increase significantly - especially broadcast television and sports programming - which are the largest drivers of increases in price adjustments," Comcast Oregon spokeswoman Amy Keiter said in a written statement.

Comcast owns one of the biggest broadcast networks, NBC, and it has cumulatively paid billions of dollars for sports programming. That includes the winter and summer Olympics, Sunday night NFL football, and now the extension of its deal with the Blazers.

Comcast lists more than two-dozen Oregon packages. Here's a sampling:

- A "starter" combination of internet service and cable TV, for example, now costs \$130 a month - up from \$125 a month previously.
- The monthly cost of a similar "triple play" combo, which adds home phone service and a high-definition picture, is \$155 a month, up from \$150 a month.
- Standalone internet service at 25 megabits per second is now \$65 a month, up from \$60 a month.

Those rate hikes don't affect viewers currently under contract, and many subscribers get discounts for signing up for new service or signing a contract to remain with Comcast. However, Comcast is also boosting special broadcast and sports fees, and those price hikes apply to all cable viewers who subscribe to the local broadcast channels or to sports channels, such as ESPN.

The "broadcast fee" will rise from \$3 a month to \$6.50 a month. And the "sports fee" climbs from \$3 a month to \$4.50. Together, they add \$3 to most Comcast TV bills regardless of whether subscribers are already under contract or have a promotional deal.

Most viewers in the Portland area have other options for cable TV and internet. Frontier serves most of Washington County and much of east Multnomah County, while CenturyLink has been adding fast, fiber-optic internet and cable TV service in much of Portland.

One competitor Portland's not getting - at least not anytime soon - is Google Fiber.

The company was preparing to announce the launch of its own fast internet and cable TV service in Portland by fall. In July, though, **[Google Fiber put those plans on hold indefinitely](#)** while it explores other, less-expensive internet technologies such as point-to-point wireless internet access.

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