

Comcast boosts speeds, holds prices

Twin Cities customers are the first in the nation to get the speed boost. The maximums depend on volume of network traffic.

By [STEVE ALEXANDER](#), Star Tribune

Last update: October 21, 2008 - 11:17 PM

The Twin Cities is the first metropolitan area in the nation to get faster Internet download speeds from cable TV firm Comcast Corp. without an increase in price.

Comcast also created a new speed tier that matches Qwest's top speed for about two-thirds the price.

Customers who had been getting up to 6 megabits per second of download speed will now get up to 12 megabits for the same \$42.95 monthly price, Comcast said Tuesday. Those with 8-megabit download speeds will get 16 megabits for the same \$52.95 price.

Both those tiers will now get up to 2 megabits of upload speed (for sending files). The 6-megabit tier offered only 1 megabit of upload speed.

A new tier of service offering 22-megabit download speeds and 5-megabit uploads will cost \$62.95 a month. Qwest's price for a 20-megabit download speed is \$99.99 a month, with a telephone package. (Prices of the three Comcast tiers apply to customers with cable TV or telephone service.)

The company also will lower the price of its 50-megabit download speed from \$150 a month to \$139.95, while increasing the upload speed from 5 megabits to 10 -- although that's the standalone price for customers who don't have Comcast cable or phone service. Comcast also offers a download speed of 768,000 bits per second for \$24.95 but doesn't actively market it.

The quoted Internet speeds are theoretical maximums, which may not be available all or even most of the time, depending on network traffic. The new speeds are to begin immediately, and customers in the former 6- and 8-megabit tiers will get the higher speeds almost automatically: Just unplug the modem from a power source, wait 1 minute, then plug it back in.

The same speeds are offered to businesses at somewhat higher prices that include Microsoft corporate software.

Comcast said the 50-megabit speed was used primarily by businesses, while the 22-megabit speed was expected to be attractive to people who play computer games online.

The changes, in effect, give many customers more of Comcast's bandwidth for the same price -- but all residential tiers of service remain subject to Comcast's recently announced 250 gigabyte per month download maximum, which the company said was designed to prevent a few bandwidth hogs from spoiling the Internet experience of others.

While some industry observers had expected a simultaneous introduction of the faster Internet service in several cities -- San Francisco and Chicago in addition to the Twin Cities, according to some rumors -- Comcast said the decision to make the Twin Cities the first was based partly on favorable local demographics, such as relatively high average education level and personal-computer use.

Comcast officials said the speed increases would not include any additional penalties on excessive Internet users other than the download maximum.

The company's new "bandwidth management system," tested in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Colorado and Florida as a way to punish excessive Internet users by reducing their Internet access speed, isn't being used in the Twin Cities area, said David Diers, Comcast vice president of advanced services in St. Paul.

Steve Alexander • 612-673-4553