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Ratewatcher Telecom Guide, Vol. 23, Dec. 2010

Maine Public Advocate Office

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Ratewatcher

TELECOM GUIDE

VOLUME 23 | DECEMBER 2010

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FairPoint Update – Down But Not Out DSL Service Expands and Customer Service Improves

FAIRPOINT'S TROUBLES AFTER ACQUIRING VERIZON-MAINE ARE WELL-KNOWN. Those troubles led FairPoint to file for bankruptcy reorganization — a proceeding that is still pending and not expected to be completed until late 2010 or early 2011. When it emerges from bankruptcy, FairPoint will have gotten rid of \$1.7 billion in debt, it will have new owners, and it will have a substantially changed management team.

FairPoint now has a new CEO, Paul Sunu, based in FairPoint headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina. However, Mr. Sunu's major focus will be FairPoint's problems in New England. Mr. Sunu has extraordinarily relevant experience — he was the chief financial officer of Hawaiian Telecom, which has a story that is eerily similar to that of FairPoint. After Verizon sold its Hawaii telephone system, the systems did not operate properly, customers left in droves, costs increased, and the company ended up in bankruptcy. Verizon and FairPoint gave assurances that Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont would not suffer a similar fate, but, of course, we did. Mr. Sunu seems to have the right experience, competence, and sincerity. Whether that will be enough to turn FairPoint into a profitable and

well-performing operation, remains to be seen.

In order to protect most of the benefits that we helped to negotiate at the time of acquisition, the Public Advocate entered into a new "regulatory settlement" with FairPoint that allowed for slightly less stringent goals for broadband expansion. If the bankruptcy plan is approved by the New York Court, FairPoint will be obligated to expand DSL service to 87% of its customers instead of the 90% level to which it originally agreed. There were a few other minor concessions. However, for the most part, FairPoint remains obligated to provide the promised benefits that were achieved by the Public Advocate and the Public Utilities Commission, including payment of 100% of the

substantial service quality penalties due to all of its customers.

In October, FairPoint asked the PUC to avoid paying a portion of the service quality penalties that our rules required after FairPoint's dismal performance last year. This new petition comes after FairPoint agreed, in our bankruptcy settlement, to pay 100% of last year's penalty to its customers. The Public Advocate is successfully opposed that proposal in order to preserve the refunds that are due to all FairPoint customers (in the former Verizon territory).

WHERE FAIRPOINT NEEDS TO IMPROVE

FAIRPOINT'S WEBSITE The Public Advocate has complained to FairPoint that its website should provide better, clearer, and more helpful information. FairPoint's website fails to mention the rate for its most basic service — local telephone service, which is priced at a reasonable \$14.69 (plus \$6.23 subscriber line charge). *cont'd.*

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Instead, FairPoint chooses to mention only its higher-priced bundled services which are not the best choice for many of its customers. FairPoint also fails to mention the federal \$6.23 subscriber line charge that telephone customers are automatically charged in addition to the advertised price of its bundles and local service.

BROADBAND EXPANSION INFORMATION The Public Advocate (as well as many potential Internet customers) has been disappointed in FairPoint's inability to provide specific information about which customers can expect to have new DSL broadband service in the near or distant future.

FAIRPOINT'S FINANCIAL STATUS While the regulatory commissions in Maine and New Hampshire approved settlements that allow the bankruptcy case in New York to proceed, the Vermont Public Service Board refused to sign on. The Vermont Board based its decision, in part, on its doubts that FairPoint will be economically viable even after shedding \$1.7 billion of its debt. The Public Advocate is similarly concerned about FairPoint's financial health going forward, and we will be keeping a close eye on FairPoint's financial circumstances. However, concerns about FairPoint's financial strength should not be of major concern to current or potential customers. The Public Advocate and the Public Utilities Commission will work hard to ensure improvement in service quality to customers, regardless of financial results. Financial risks should remain with investors, not customers.

New High Quality VOIP Telephone Service from 207ME

207ME is a small local Maine telecommunications company providing some innovative services. 207ME began as a dial-up Internet service provider with rates as low as \$7/month. Now, it offers DSL service (as a reseller) in a variety of towns, as well as VOIP-based telephone service in most of the State. As with nearly all VOIP telephone services, it is necessary to have an underlying broadband connection in order to use a VOIP telephone service.

207ME's VOIP services are worth considering based on its reasonable pricing and high-quality of service. Service from 207ME should be superior to typical national VOIP services because 207ME interconnects to the public telephone network within Maine, as opposed to typical VOIP services which ride the public Internet for longer distances. This service should be on par with the telephone services offered by Time Warner and Comcast. However, 207ME's rates are substantially lower. The prices listed in the VOIP chart on page 13 represent the total bill — no taxes or surcharges are added.



MAKE TELEPHONE CALLS THROUGH GMAIL (FOR FREE)

Customers with a broadband connection who desire a convenient free way to make telephone calls can take advantage of one of the latest innovations from Google. The last Ratewatcher covered Google Voice, a free VOIP service that allows you to choose a telephone number and receive calls to that number on all or any of your telephones or wireless devices. As we reported, it also allowed you to make calls from your computer.

Now, Google Voice works through Gmail, but you don't even need a Google Voice account to make out-bound calls from Gmail. If you have a free Gmail (email) account, all you need to do is sign into your email account and download the voice program (which takes about 20 seconds). Then, whenever you are logged into Gmail, you can click on the voice program ("dial phones") and a dialpad will appear on your screen. From there, just click or type any number in the U.S. and you'll be talking for free. If you sign up for a free Google Voice account and get your own phone number, you can link it to your Gmail account and set it to ring you in Gmail when your Google Voice number is dialed by another party. International calls can also be made — those are charged at very low rates (typically 2 cents/minute). If your computer does not have a built-in microphone, you will need to buy one (under \$10) in order to use this service.

BOTTOM LINE a good, convenient and free way to turn your computer into a telephone.

Touchtone Raises Rates to Customers of Rural Local Phone Companies

ARE THERE ALTERNATIVES?

For many years, the Ratewatcher has recommended Touchtone as a top choice for long-distance customers served by rural local phone companies — because Touchtone was one of the only long-distance phone companies that charged low rates and did not discriminate against customers of our rural phone companies. Recently, Touchtone has begun to raise its typical rate from 3.9 cents per minute to 6.9 cents per minute for customers in certain parts of the State. It does cost a bit more for a long-distance company to serve in independent local company areas because transaction costs are a bit higher and because the per-minute access rates paid by the long-distance company are also a bit higher.

However, the reason that small long-distance companies like Pioneer and Touchtone need to charge higher rates in certain rural areas is because they must accept the wholesale rates of big carriers such as AT&T, Qwest, FairPoint and others. Unfortunately, even if the price discrimination against customers in independent areas is not justified, these large long-distance telephone companies have the right to set their own prices without approval from the Public Utilities Commission because the Commission de-regulated long-distance rates. Without such regulation, customers in these rural areas are subject to what may be arbitrary pricing policies because the market is not sufficiently competitive.

Although customers of these small telephone companies have the disadvantage of fewer services and higher prices, those customers do get the benefit of local rates that are subsidized by the federal Universal Service Fund and, in some cases, by the Maine Universal Service Fund. It costs more to serve customers in more sparse areas while those small local phone companies are obligated to serve every last customer.

ALTERNATIVES Unfortunately, Touchtone was one of the few low-cost long-distance carriers that, until recently, did not discriminate against customers of independent telephone companies. Now, it appears that low, nondiscriminatory rates for those customers are available only from certain prepaid long-distance services such as Onesuite.com. That may very well be the best long-distance option for independent-area customers who want to keep their rate around 3 cents per minute (see page 8).

PIONEER TELEPHONE NOW OFFERING LOCAL CALLING PLANS AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO FAIRPOINT

The Ratewatcher has long recommended Pioneer Telephone to long-distance customers in the “new” FairPoint (i.e., former Verizon) territory. Now, as of December 1, 2010, those customers have the opportunity to choose Pioneer for local and long-distance service and have it all on one bill.

IS PIONEER'S LOCAL SERVICE A GOOD DEAL? It depends, because Pioneer's plans all come with 150 minutes of long-distance service and bundles of calling features. Therefore, for customers who don't care about subscribing to call features such as Caller ID, Call Waiting and others, FairPoint offers the best value at a state-regulated rate of \$14.69 (total bill for unlimited local service is approximately \$23, minus service quality rebates). See page 4 for the rates and details of Pioneer's new local telephone service.

FAIRPOINT MAY STILL BE THE BEST CHOICE FOR MANY CUSTOMERS

FAIRPOINT VERSUS TIME WARNER AND WIRELESS SERVICES

FairPoint has lost a substantial number of its customers to Time Warner (and Comcast), to VOIP companies, and to mobile phone carriers. However, as FairPoint's latest round of marketing points out, there are advantages to FairPoint's telephone service. Traditional telephone service (including such service from alternative local phone companies) remains the most reliable, trouble-free communications service available, and it will usually work during a power interruption (if you have at least one non-cordless phone). Unlike those of cable and wireless companies, FairPoint's local rates are regulated, set at a reasonable level, and cannot be increased without approval from the Public Utilities Commission. Unlike cable and wireless companies, FairPoint is subject to strict customer service standards and rules, which is why every customer is now seeing a rebate for the poor service quality provided last year. Finally, customers who do not use many long-distance minutes can save money with FairPoint because its basic unlimited local service is less expensive than the local and long-distance bundles sold by cable companies. Of course, cable phone service and wireless services have their advantages, but both have minimum prices that are higher than FairPoint's minimum price for low-volume users.

>> alternative local phone companies

The following competitive local telephone companies (CLECs) offer an alternative to FairPoint's local service in the former Verizon territory. Business customers are more likely to find savings here than residential customers. However, residential customers seeking a package of optional features and pay-as-you-go long-distance, along

with local telephone service, may find some of these offers attractive. All rates include a \$6.50 line charge where applicable. Compare to FairPoint's Local Rates — \$21.08 for residential customers (\$14.69 + \$6.39 subscriber line charge) and \$38.67 for business customers (\$32.28 + \$6.39 subscriber line charge).

NAME/PHONE/WEBSITE	BUSINESS OR RESIDENTIAL	MONTHLY RATES PER LINE (EXCLUDING SURCHARGES & TAXES)	NOTES
BCN Telecom 888-866-7266 bcntele.com	B	\$27.80 – \$37.80 depending on number of lines & bundle of services	Available throughout FairPoint territory
GWI 866-494-2020 gwi.net	B	B – \$44.43	*Phone rate is reduced by \$10 when combined with DSL service
	R	R – \$31.45*	Available in selected "new" FairPoint exchanges
OTT Communications 877-643-6246 ottcommunications.com (formerly MidMaine Comm. & PineTree Networks)	B	B – \$26.00 – \$35.00	Features package including voicemail: \$5 Statewide (some limitations apply)
	R	R – \$50.45 local/DSL	
One Communications 800-825-5282 onecommunications.com	B	\$34.49 – \$38.49 depending on contract length	Available throughout FairPoint territory
Oxford 800-520-9911 oxfordnetworks.com	B	B – \$31.28 – \$40.34	Norway/South Paris
	R	R – \$16.63 – \$19.72	
Pioneer Telephone 866-329-8700 pioneertelephone.net	B	B – \$24 – \$28 depending on number of lines & bundled services	Lewiston/Auburn
	R	R – \$21.20 – \$24.95 depending on bundle options	
	R	R – \$29 – \$40 depending on calling features (150 included instate long-distance minutes)	
Telrite 866-285-3989 telrite.com	B & R	\$35.49 – \$46.49 depending on contract length	Available throughout FairPoint territory
**USA Telephone 877-872-2800 savewithusa.com	B	B – \$43.45	Local service bundled with 3¢ instate and interstate LD minutes and 6 features DSL starting at \$25/mo. (R&B) \$2 fee for paper billing
	R	R – \$34.45 price depends on location	

**USA may be temporarily unable to accept new customers. Company filed for bankruptcy protection and is in dispute with FairPoint.

Note: Local service is also provided by VOIP telephone companies.

DEAD CALLS ARE A GROWING PROBLEM

Recently, we have received several complaints from customers in various places in the U.S. that their calls to Maine telephone numbers cannot be completed. When those customers call their local telephone companies to complain, those companies often blame the Maine local phone company. However, Maine's local phone companies are not the problem. Telephone networks have been getting increasingly complex and involve the interconnection between Internet Protocol (digital) traffic, wireless traffic, and traditional circuit-switched telephone traffic. Many calls pass through various routers and switches in order to route calls at the speed of light. However, all of the routers and switches must be programmed correctly in order for calls to be properly routed to their destination. Investigations are now underway to track down the carriers that are failing to properly program their equipment to recognize the electronic path to some of Maine's smaller phone companies.

Time Warner and Comcast Are Now Regulated Telephone Companies in the State of Maine

Ever since Time Warner began offering Digital Phone and Comcast began offering Digital Voice telephone services in Maine, there has been an uneasy ambiguity about whether those companies were subject to regulation and consumer protection rules that normally apply to telephone service in Maine. In October, the Public Utilities Commission finally put an end to that ambiguity after approximately two years of litigation. The Commission agreed with the Public Advocate and the Telephone Association of Maine, and ruled that the telephone services of cable providers meet the State's definition of telephone utility service and that no federal law or policy preempts the State from regulating the telephone services of cable providers.

The practical result of this ruling is that cable operators now need to be licensed to provide telephone service and that various consumer protection and billing rules will apply to those cable companies. In addition, the Commission's Consumer Assistance Division will have the authority to resolve billing and disconnection disputes between customers and cable operators. The Commission has deregulated pricing by competitive telephone companies, so we won't be seeing rate proceedings involving Time Warner's or Comcast's phone services, or any other burdensome regulation of those services.

It's Time to Do Something About Unfair and Confusing Billing Practices

In the next legislative session, the Public Advocate plans to pursue a law that would prevent cable and cellular companies from inventing sneaky line item surcharges that raise the rates you pay on your bills. In a recent legislative session, we successfully pushed for a new law that limits line items from regulated telephone companies to items that are actually requested by the customer or mandated by federal or state law. We think that it's only fair that cable and wireless carriers adopt that same "fair billing" rule. Since cable and wireless rates are not regulated, those companies are free to recover any costs within their advertised rates, and make as much profit as they can. However, we object to the practice of advertising one rate and then charging a higher one

based on its addition of confusing bill surcharges.

The Public Advocate is also taking a close look at how surcharges are applied by telephone companies. It appears that some companies are calculating surcharges differently from others even though they should all be playing by the same rules.

We think it is time for FairPoint and other phone companies to stop advertising rates that omit the Subscriber Line Charge of \$6.23 to \$6.50. This charge is simply part of the rate that goes directly to the phone company just the same as the advertised portion of the rate. So, when you see an advertised introductory rate for a bundled service from FairPoint for \$56.99, the rate is really \$63.22 plus

other legitimate taxes and regulatory fees. Always ask for a realistic estimate for the total bill before agreeing to any new services. Sadly, we have had many reports that customer service representatives of many large communications firms are simply unable to provide a simple response to such a reasonable question. It's also sad that currently, there are no State or federal regulations that would require a straightforward answer to the question, "how much will I have to pay each month?"

Always ask about the "permanent" rate when you sign up for a new bundle with an "introductory rate." Advertisements often completely omit the higher rate that you will be paying for the vast majority of time during which the service will be provided.

>> bundled plans: residential (local, long-distance, and dsl)

COMPANY	FEATURES	UNLIMITED LOCAL AND TOLL*	UNLIMITED LOCAL AND INSTATE TOLL*	UNLIMITED TOLL* ONLY	DSL & UNLIMITED LOCAL & TOLL	NOTES
FairPoint Freedom 866-984-2001 fairpoint.com	Unlimited to US, Canada & Puerto Rico 3 features	\$58.22 (\$53.22 without features)	\$37.39 3 features (Voicemail not included)	NA	Starting at \$63.38* \$68.38* with features	12-month introductory rate Available throughout FairPoint's "new" territory Voicemail add \$5
GWJ 866-494-2020 gwi.net	Unlimited to US & Canada 5 features	\$43.45*	\$34.95*	N/A	\$63.40	*Phone rate is \$10 less with DSL bundle Available in most of FairPoint territory \$5 extra w/features inc. voicemail
IDT Unlimited 800-254-1718 idt.net	Unlimited to US & Canada 5 features (optional)	\$51.50	\$34.00 (4 features)	N/A	\$69.50	Throughout FairPoint territory Voicemail \$2.95/mo.
OTT Communications 877-643-6246 ottcommunications.com (formerly MidMaine Comm. & PineTree Networks)	Unlimited to US & Canada 3 features	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$50.45	Augusta, Bangor/Brewer, Bar Harbor, Bath, Belfast, Biddeford/Saco, Brunswick, Ellsworth, Waterville, Lewiston/Auburn, Newport, N. Deering, Old Town, Orono, Portland, Presque Isle, Sanford, Scarborough, Skowhegan, S. Portland, Rockland, Westbrook, Windham 1-yr. contract required or \$75 early termination fee
Oxford Networks 800-520-9911 oxfordnetworks.com	Unlimited to US & Canada 5 features (optional)	\$50 (\$43 without features)	N/A	\$18	\$81 (includes 5 calling features)	Lewiston/Auburn and Norway/South Paris area only
**USA Telephone 877-872-2800 savewithusa.com	Unlimited to US & Canada 5 features	\$59.95	N/A	N/A	\$84.90	Available throughout FairPoint territory \$2 extra for paper billing

**May be temporarily unable to accept new customers

>> prepaid calling

There are literally thousands of prepaid phone offers available – from cards in local convenience stores to web sites specializing in calls to foreign countries. In many cases, a phone company, such as AT&T, may offer many different rates for prepaid minutes depending on which store or web site is selling it (buy an AT&T card at Walmart and you'll be paying nearly double the rate of the Sam's Club card). In the chart below, we selected prepaid offers based on a combina-

tion of their rates and their availability in Maine. Special calling cards marketed for calling to individual countries may be priced much lower for those international calls, but many of those cards may come with hidden charges or come from a less-than-reputable company. Note that calls to mobile phones in foreign countries can be priced much higher than the rates shown.

	VERIZON (RITE AID)	ONESUITE.COM	SAM'S CLUB/AT&T
US Rate	4¢ – 6.7¢* (2,000 min. to 150 min.)	2.9¢	8.52¢ instate / 2.84¢ interstate
To Western Europe	International Rates Unavailable	3.4¢ – 12.5¢	International Rates Unavailable
To Canada		3.2¢	
Rate to US From Western Europe		6.14¢ – 15¢	
Rate to US from Canada		3.5¢	
Payphone Charge	\$1.20 – \$2.10	55¢	\$1.00 – \$2.99
Other Fees	5% sales tax on initial store purchase-maximum of 15% surcharge on phone refills	None	5% sales tax on initial store purchase-maximum of 15% surcharge on phone refills
How to buy?	Rite Aid stores	www.onesuite.com or 866-417-8483	Sam's Club
Expiration	Usually No expiration	6 months from activation, last recharge, or usage	Usually No Expiration
Record of calls	No	Yes via Internet	No
Notes	*Rate depends on quantity of minutes purchased. Occasionally Rite Aid offers "buy one card, get one free." International Prepaid Phone Cards available.	\$1/month "One Suite Fax" sends faxes to your email address. Voice mail available as email attachment. Lower rates apply when using VOIP access from your computer.	Enhanced features offered at extra charge. AT&T also offers card with lower international rates (Worldwide Prepaid Phone Card).
Customer Service	800-721-4336	866-417-8483	800-811-4763

>> long-distance plans

(Rates apply in "new" FairPoint territory)

COMPANY	PIONEER pioneertelephone.com		TOUCHTONE touchtone.net		FAIRPOINT fairpoint.com	
FEATURED PLAN	Talk Cents		3.9¢ Plan		5¢ Standalone Plan	
(RESIDENTIAL)	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate
RESIDENTIAL per minute rate (excluding surcharges & taxes)	3.5¢	3.25¢	3.9¢	3.9¢	5¢	5¢
Monthly Minimum	none		none		none	
Monthly Fee	\$1.99*		\$2.97		\$5.00	
SAMPLE RESIDENTIAL MONTHLY COSTS	Includes 50% instate/50% interstate minutes & monthly fees, excluding surcharges & taxes.					
LOW @ 10 mins. per month	\$1.33*		\$3.36		\$5.50	
MEDIUM @ 100 mins. per month	\$4.37*		\$6.87		\$10.00	
HIGH @ 500 mins. per month	\$17.87*		\$22.47		\$30.00	
HIGHEST @ 1,000 mins. per month	\$34.74*		\$41.97		\$55.00	
Hawaii/Alaska	6.9¢		7.9¢/15¢		5¢	
SAMPLE RESIDENTIAL INTERNATIONAL RATES (per minute)						
Afghanistan	4.9¢		6.9¢		\$1.74	
Canada	4¢		3.9¢		\$1.04	
Costa Rica	10.9¢		10¢		\$4.41	
France	4.5¢		4.9¢		\$3.43	
Sweden	4.9¢		4.9¢		\$3.41	
United Kingdom	5¢		4.9¢		\$2.89	
Rate available in rural independent areas?	no		yes		no	
(BUSINESS)	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate
Business per minute rates (excluding surcharges and taxes)	3.5¢	2.7¢	3.9¢	3.9¢	5.5¢	5.5¢
Monthly Minimum	none		none		\$5.00	
Monthly Fee	\$1.99*		\$2.97		none	
PICC Charges (per line)	\$4.21		\$3.99		47¢	
In-bound 800 Rates	3.5¢**	2.7¢**	3.9¢*	3.9¢*	5.5¢*	5.5¢*
TO SUBSCRIBE, CALL:	877-492-6878		Touchtone Agents in Maine: 888-594-2500, 207-839-8484		800-585-4466	
NOTE: Surcharges are not included in the rates shown \$5 fee to change carrier is often covered by new carrier upon request PICC charges (a per-line access charge) apply to multi-line business customers only 1-minute billing unless otherwise noted An average customer will save about 10% as a result of 6-second billing *Beware that international calls to mobile phones priced much higher	*\$1.99 fee waived w/online billing or usage over \$15 **99¢/mo. per 800 number Alt. Plans-Rate Buster 2.9¢ instate/2.7¢ interstate with 1-minute billing 6-second billing with listed plan Pioneer is a Maine company 1.9¢/min. to call other Pioneer customers \$20 one-time credit available if you mention Public Advocate's Ratewatcher Guide when requesting new service Pioneer now offers local telephone service bundles		6-second billing Lower rate may be available for high-volume customers Customer service 800-266-4006 *\$1.99/mo. per 800 number NOTE - Rates may now be higher for customers served by independent local telephone companies		*\$10/mo. fee applies to 800 inbound service 18-second minimum 6-second billing applies to most business plans Residential plans get 1-minute billing \$4/mo. for International Choice Plan for lower international rates	

>> voip services and plans

FEATURES	PRICE	NOTES	
FREE/LOW COST/PREPAID			
JAJAH jajah.com 650-967-4357	Dial call on computer—then talk on your regular phone	Free to other Jajah users 3¢/min. for domestic calls	Innovative service requires no software or equipment
MAGICJACK magicjack.com 561-594-2140	Unlimited to US, Puerto Rico & U.S. Virgin Islands Unlimited to other MagicJack users	\$20/year	Device that connects to USB port \$40 for first year \$20 for each add'l year of service
SKYPE skype.com	Unlimited worldwide PC to PC and low rates to ring regular phone numbers	Free to other Skype users 2.3¢/min. for domestic calls (some plans include certain international calling) Low international rates Receive calls – starting at \$6/mo. Plus 3.9¢ to 7.9¢ connection fee per call	Requires computer mic/speakers, or headset Automatic refill plans are available including monthly, quarterly or yearly subscriptions Skype unlimited domestic calling starting at \$3/mo.
CALLCENTRIC callcentric.com 212-379-4027	Free calling to other CallCentric users or ring phone numbers at low domestic or international rates	Free between CallCentric users 2.7¢/min. for domestic calls and low international rates	Requires software or telephone adapter
GOOGLE VOICE Google.com/voice	Allows free calling from computer and will ring all or any of your landline or wireless telephones	Free except for international calling which is offered at low rates	New telephone number is assigned. You decide which of your phones ring when that number is dialed. Also enables calling directly to and from Gmail.
YAHOO VOICE Voice.yahoo,jajah.com	Unlimited worldwide PC to PC and low rates to ring regular phone numbers	1.9¢/min. for domestic calls Low international rates Receive calls – starting at \$2.49/mo.	Requires computer mic/speakers, or headset Prepaid funds expire if account is inactive for 180 days
SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES WITH PHONE ADAPTER			
AXIOM TECHNOLOGIES LLC axiom-tech.net 866-708-7998	Unlimited to US	\$32.50/month	Call for business plans \$99 Installation w/adapter
BROADVOICE broadvoice.com 212-202-0300	Unlimited in Maine	\$10/month + 3.9¢/min. interstate & Canada Low international rates	Adapter included \$30 activation fee May be used with Android mobile phone – download adapter Several other calling plans available
	Unlimited World (US + 21 countries)	\$20/month	
FUTURE NINE future-nine.com	Pay As You Go or monthly subscription	1¢/min. \$7/mo. 250 domestic min. \$13.50/mo. 2000 domestic min.	
LINGO lingo.com	Unlimited to US, Canada & Western Europe	\$22/month	\$80 activation/equipment fee (may be waived)
	500 Minutes US, Canada & Puerto Rico	\$15/month	First month free \$60 first year termination fee
NET2PHONE • Voiceline net2phone.com	Unlimited US, Canada & Puerto Rico	\$30/mo. – Europe 5¢ – 8¢	\$40 first year termination fee Requires prepayment
	Add Europe	+ \$40/mo.	\$30 activation fee
	500 minutes US & Canada	\$15/mo.	Adapter included Voicemail 99¢
	350 minutes Western Europe	\$15/mo.	

>> voip services and plans cont'd

	FEATURES	PRICE	NOTES
OOMA ooma.com 866-452-6662	Unlimited to US	\$230 initial cost for ooma device International calls as low as 2¢/min.	No monthly fees or contracts No per-minute cost for domestic calls \$40 to port telephone number \$5/mo. for voicemail or \$50/yr
PHONE POWER Phonepower.com 888-607-6937	24 Month Unlimited US/Canada + 1 Hour Free International Calling Per Month	\$15/mo. with 2 yr. contract	Free equipment lease Free second line \$8/mo. expands international calling to 2 hrs.
	12 Month Unlimited US/Canada + 1 Hour Free International Calling Per Month	\$17/mo. with 1 yr. contract	
SIMPLEPHONE CO. Simplephoneco.com 888-272-8070	Unlimited Minutes Free Local + Long Distance	\$18/mo.	No activation fees
	Unlimited Minutes Free Local + Long Distance; plus Word 5 (Canada, Mexico, India, China & UK free)	\$17/mo.	
8X8, INC. 8x8.com 866-879-8647	Freedom Unlimited US & Canada	\$25/mo. — Europe 3¢ – 8¢	\$30 Activation fee Free adapter w/residential plan Claims to be operational with dialup Internet
	Freedom Unlimited Global Unlimited Calls to 40 European & Asia countries/cities included	\$40 extra per continent/month	
TOUCHTONE Touchtone.net 800-266-4006	500 min/month, US, Canada & 20 countries	\$15/mo Additional minutes — 2.5¢	Adapter included No activation fee
	Unlimited to US, Canada, Puerto Rico and selected countries	\$25/mo. International Rates 6¢ – 29¢	
VIA TALK Viataalk.com 866-626-7150	Unlimited US/Canada	\$17/mo. Add'l 1200 International Minutes \$9/mo.	\$30 activation fee No setup fee
VOICEPULSE voicepulse.com 732-339-5100	Unlimited US	\$25/mo.	Adapter included Required 1-year term
	Unlimited ME + 200 Long Distance minutes	\$15/mo. Europe 5¢ – 9¢	
VOIPYOURLIFE voipyourlife.com 888-369-8647	Unlimited US & Canada	\$24/mo.	Free hardware; Free activation Choose US or Canada phone # No term or fee
	Unlimited US, Canada & over 30 countries	\$30/mo.	
VONAGE vonage.com 800-486-6315	Unlimited US, Canada & Puerto Rico + 60 countries	\$26/mo. International calls starting at 1¢	No activation fee Adapter included
	500 Minutes	\$18/mo. (3.9¢/min. after 500 included)	

>> voip services and plans cont'd

FEATURES	PRICE	NOTES
PRIVATE NETWORKS (enhanced VOIP)		
207ME.com 888-229-2411	Unlimited US, Canada, Puerto Rico & U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, Mariana	\$30/mo.
	Unlimited Maine + Long Distance at 1.9¢/min.	\$20/mo.
	Unlimited Local + Long Distance/US/Canada at 4.9¢/minute	\$15/mo.
COMCAST Digital Voice comcast.com 800-266-2278	Unlimited to US, Canada and Puerto Rico	\$45/mo.
	Available in most of Bath, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Durham, Freeport, Harpswell, Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich	Alternative plan -- \$25 unlimited local + 5¢/min. toll
DIGIPHONE Bee Line Cable 800-439-4611	Unlimited to US and Canada	Residential \$25/mo. Business \$34/mo.
	Unlimited to US, Hawaii, Alaska & Canada	\$35/mo. (if Bee Line Cable Customer) \$40/mo. for others
MIDCOAST INTERNET SOLUTIONS midcoast.com 207-594-8277	Unlimited to US, Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico & Virgin Islands	\$24/mo. Europe 7¢ - 12¢/min.
	Unlimited Local Calling	\$18/mo.
TIME WARNER CABLE Digital Phone timewarnercable.com 877-410-1440	Unlimited to US, Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico & Virgin Islands	\$40/mo. Europe 7¢ - 12¢/min.
REDZONE Redzonewireless.com 207-596-5700	Local	\$27/mo. 3.5/min. in-state & out-of-state calling
	Unlimited Local Plus (300 in-state & 300 out-of-state mins.)	\$32/mo.
	Unlimited US	\$35/mo.

Note: FCC has required full service retail VOIP providers to comply with E-911. Some services listed here are not required to provide E-911.

WHAT IS "ENHANCED" VOIP SERVICE?

Our VOIP chart separates VOIP into three "flavors" — free/low cost, national, and enhanced. "Enhanced" VOIP services offer the ability to port local Maine numbers and provide a reliable interconnection to the public telephone network at a point within the State. National services such as Vonage generally work well but are less reliable because their voice traffic rides on the public Internet for a longer distance. While "enhanced" VOIP services are more reliable, they are not portable. That is, they

require that your VOIP adapter remain at your home or business location. Of course, this is important for purposes of registering your location for emergency E911 service. With "national" services such as Vonage, you can take your adapter anywhere in the world and it will ring you there. "Free/low cost" services are also portable and often rely on a personal computer.

In Maine, enhanced services are offered by the cable operators, by 207ME, and

by Redzone Wireless. These companies can offer "local" telephone numbers and reliable interconnection with local phone companies. "National" VOIP companies may offer telephone numbers within Maine's 207 area code, but not necessarily with a three-digit prefix that makes it a 'local' call where your home or business is located. Even "enhanced" VOIP services may not be able to obtain local phone numbers within the territories of certain independent local telephone companies.

Low-Income Customers Now Get Many More Monthly Minutes with Tracfone's Safelink Program

The Lifeline Program provides discounted or free telephone service for low-income customers with funding from the federal Universal Service Fund. Traditionally, Lifeline service has been in the form of a discount from the rates normally charged by the local telephone company. However, in recent years, cellular carriers such as US Cellular and Tracfone have become eligible to offer Lifeline service.

Tracfone is a prepaid wireless provider that offers a free wireless phone and 250 free minutes of service per month (increased from 68 minutes per month under the initial offering). It also offers two other options of interest to some customers — 125 minutes with 125 text messages or 68 minutes of calling with 204 text messages and calling to 60 international destinations. Unused minutes carry over to following month under all three plans. Additional minutes, if needed, would need to be purchased at Tracfone's normal rates.

Lifeline customers may not receive multiple Lifeline services — customers must choose between their normal Lifeline discount from the local phone company, a US Cellular wireless plan discount, or the Tracfone (Safelink) prepaid wireless free service. To sign up, call 1800 SAFELINK (1800 723-3546).

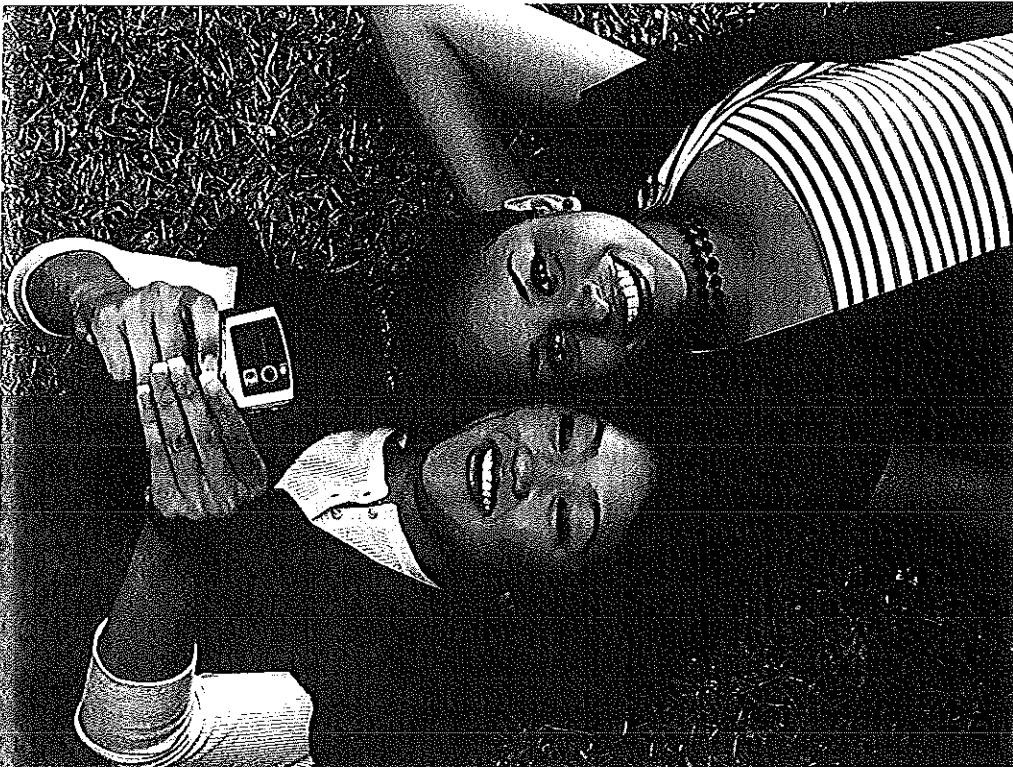
Resellers of Cellular Service Offer Some Attractive Plans

Sometimes, the best prices are available from smaller telephone companies who use facilities owned by larger companies. This seems to be the case in today's cell phone market. Although the big carriers have the vast majority of the market share for cellular service, it is worth checking out two resellers that provide service in Maine — Tracfone and Consumer Cellular.

TRACFONE In addition to its traditional prepaid services, Tracfone now offers a plan called "Straight-Talk," which is structured much like the traditional monthly fee contract plan — but no contract is required. For \$45 per month, Tracfone offers unlimited voice, text and Internet access (data) on your selected smartphone. This is substantially less expensive than similar plans from the larger facilities-based carriers.

CONSUMER CELLULAR is another reseller using the networks of larger carriers like AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile. Consumer Cellular has plans that are friendly to low-volume users and those who prefer not to be obligated under a contract.

Prices for plans of both of these resold wireless services are shown on page 15.



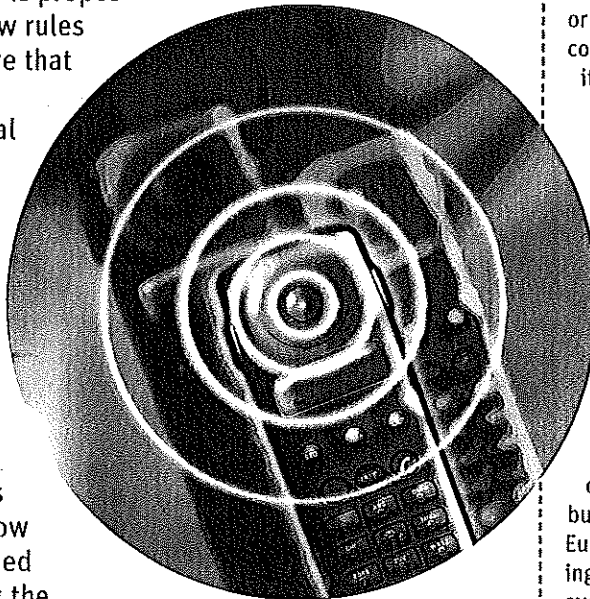
ARE YOU RISKING A \$30,000 WIRELESS BILL?

Mobile phones have become a lot more complicated. In addition to the traditional problem of using more than your monthly allowance of minutes, you may be getting separate charges for international calling, texts and data (Internet) usage. So how do you know how much you're spending before it's too late? After hearing a number of horror stories, including that of a Maryland resident who came home to a \$30,000 bill from T-Mobile after visiting his sister in Haiti, the FCC is proposing new "bill shock" rules. The new rules would, among other things, require that wireless carriers notify you when you are about to exceed the normal monthly limits on your minutes, texts, or megabyte usage. The FCC is also finally getting serious about looking into bogus surcharges found on the bills of wireless carriers, as part of its new more consumer-friendly agenda.

Charges by the megabyte are especially confusing for customers — after all, who could possibly know how many megabytes are being used when, for example, you are surfing the web on your smartphone or laptop? Until the FCC adopts new rules to protect consumers, there is a way to at least estimate your usage — try one of the free online meters that converts various Internet activities into megabytes or gigabytes used, such as:

www.broadband.org/usage_calculator.html

www.vodafone.com.au/personal/live/internet/calculator/index.htm



What Can You Tell From a Telephone Number?

Ever wanted to know if a phone number is local in your calling area? Ever been curious about where the number is located, or what cell-phone or landline phone company uses the number? Until recently, it was a fairly simple matter — the first 3 digits of a 7 digit phone number was a clear indication of the location of the number being dialed. However, with millions of numbers being assigned to wireless phones and VOIP services, it has become much more confusing. It can also cost you money unexpectedly when you call your next door neighbor's cell phone or VOIP service without realizing that you are making a toll call even if your neighbor is home right next door when you call. Conversely, you could be making a free call to a number in your local calling area but reaching a VOIP phone being used in Europe. The good news is that numbering information is available, along with everything else you've ever wanted to know about phone numbers. Check out the website of the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA):

www.nanpa.com/reports/reports_cocodes_assign.html

(scroll down to Excel version, and click on "Eastern" for Maine numbers)

FREE STUFF DEPARTMENT (because we love free stuff)

UNLIMITED FREE TEXTING

on your iTouch, iPhone or iPad plus a free phone number! www.pinger.com

FREE DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE

(from landline or wireless)

1800 FREE411 automated voice with human backup, short ad, residential or business numbers — now offering government numbers, weather and horoscopes.

800 INFOFAST (live human, no ad, residential or business numbers).

1800 YELLOWPAGES (by AT&T) automated voice, short ad, government or business numbers.

GOOGLE'S 411 BY TEXT SERVICE text 466453 (Google) with the name and location of a business and you will receive a text with the phone number.

FREE PHONE SERVICE

CALL PHONES FROM GMAIL www.google.com/Gmail (click on "New Features") Requires computer and microphone.

GOOGLE VOICE www.google.com/voice Includes free new phone number. Requires underlying phone or wireless service.

FREE CELLULAR SERVICE

WIFI NETWORKS If you have a Wifi-enabled smartphone, you can avoid going over your quantity of wireless plan minutes or incurring expensive international calling rates, by using the WiFi function when in the presence of a WiFi hotspot. Of course, computer based VOIP services like Skype are also free from computer to computer.

SAFELINK (only for Lifeline-eligible customers) 1800 SAFELINK — up to 250 free minutes per month, plus free wireless phone (requires choice between this benefit or another Lifeline discount).

>> prepaid wireless plans

	AT&T GO PHONE Simple Plan att.com/gophone.com 800-467-4663	NET 10 (TRACFONE) net10.com 877-836-2368	T-MOBILE STICK TOGETHER tmobile.com 877-387-4324	TRACFONE tracfone.com 800-867-7183
Initial Cost of phone	\$8 - \$100	\$20 - \$100	\$20 - \$90	\$10 - \$125
Home Area	Most of US	Most of US	Most of US	Most of US
Airtime Rate Per Minute (US)	25¢	10¢	10¢ - 34¢	18¢ - 34¢
Roaming Charge Per Minute	0	0	0	Double airtime rate may apply in certain roaming areas with non-GSM phones
To Canada	additional 19¢ per minute	additional 5¢ per minute	additional 50¢ per minute	Airtime rate
From Canada	No Service	No service	69¢ per minute	No service
Minimum Recharge Dollars	\$15	\$20	\$10	\$20
Expiration of Minutes (days) (varies by refill amount chosen)	30-365	30-180	90-365	90-365
Messaging/Texting on compatible phones	25¢/min. to send 20¢/min. to receive	5¢ text sent/received.	10¢/min. to send 5¢/min. to receive	3 messages per airtime minute included

SHOWN BELOW IS THE ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST FOR A CUSTOMER USING 25 AND 100 MINUTES/MONTH (DOES NOT INCLUDE COST OF INITIAL PACKAGE OR ROAMING CALLS)

25 minutes/month				
Cost	\$100	\$180	\$100	\$100
Minutes purchased	400	1800	1000	400
Type of refill	1 x 365 days	3 x 120 days	1 x 365 days	1 x 365 days
100 minutes/month				
Cost	\$300	\$180	\$150	\$240
Minutes purchased	1200	1800	1400	1200
Type of refill	2 x 365 days	3 x 120 days	1 x 365 + 1 x 90	6 x 90 days
NOTE: Customers who use more than 150 minutes per month should consider regular monthly fee cellular plans.	Unlimited Calling Plan nationwide, \$3/day access charge. With unlimited AT&T Mobile to Mobile plan-- calls 10¢/min. + \$1/day access fee on days when there is any incoming or outgoing use.	May not make or receive calls from locations outside of US, Puerto Rico or US Virgin Islands. Must register to make international calls --International calls 15¢/min. to over 60 countries.	Airtime rate depends on number and duration of minutes purchased. After spending \$100 you may receive 15% more minutes and 365 days duration.	Airtime rate depends on number and duration of minutes purchased. Double-minute promotions available.
Watch for and ask about promotions.	Messaging and Data packages available. Minutes roll over.	Minutes roll over.	Monthly prepaid Unlimited and 10¢/min plans available.	No extra charge for calls to over 100 international destinations -- call 800-706-3839 to activate. Minutes roll over.

30 monthly fee wireless plans

RESELLERS

	AT&T WIRELESS.ATT.COM 888-333-7055		T MOBILE TMOBILE.COM 800-866-2453				US CELLULAR uscellular.com 888-944-9400				VERIZON verizon.com 800-256-4646		CONSUMER CELLULAR consumercellular.com 888-345-5509		STRAIGHTTALK straighttalk.com 877-430-2355	
	2 yr. Contract		No Contract		2 yr. Contract		2 yr. Contract				1 yr., 2 yr. or Monthly Contract		No Contract	No Contract		
	Nation 450 Family Talk	Nation 550 Family Talk	Individual	Family	Individual 500	Family Time 750	Wide Area 700	Wide Area Family 1000	National 450	National Family 700	Nationwide Single	Nationwide Family Share	Anywhere 1000	All You Need		
Monthly Fee	\$40	\$60 (2 lines)	\$30	\$50 (2 lines)	\$40	\$60 (2 lines)	\$40	\$70 (2 lines)	\$40	\$70 (2 lines)	\$40	\$70 (2 lines)	\$40	\$30 - \$45		
Anytime Minutes	450	550	500	750	500	750	700	1000	450	700	450	700	1000	1000 - Unlimited		
Offpeak Minutes	5000	Unlimited		Unlimited		Unlimited	\$6 Unlimited	Unlimited	\$8 Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	None	N/A			
Cost per extra min.	45¢			45¢				49¢			45¢	25¢ (10¢ w/ \$60 plan)	N/A			
Cost of extra line	N/A	\$10	N/A	\$10	N/A	\$10	N/A	\$10	N/A	\$10	N/A	\$10	N/A			
Roaming Rate	0		0		0		69		0		0	0	0			
From Canada	79¢		69¢		99¢/min. + \$3/day access fee + toll					69¢		Not available	Not available			
To Canada	29¢		39¢		19¢					49¢		20¢	Not available			
Home Area	US		US		ME, NH (excluding Portsmouth), VT and parts of 22 other states in south, midwest and west			US		US		US	US			
Type of Network	GSM/3G		GSM/3G				CDMA/3G				CDMA/3G		GSM/3G	CDMA or GSM		
Text messaging	20¢ per text message sent/received. Add ons: \$5/mo. - 200 text \$15/mo. - 1500 text \$20/mo. - Unlimited text Unlimited Text for Family Plans \$30/mo.		20¢ per text message sent/received. Individual Talk + Text starting at \$40; Unlimited \$60 Family Talk + Text + Web starting at \$60; Unlimited \$80 Individual Talk + Text starting at \$50; Unlimited \$70 Family Talk + Text + Web starting at \$80; Unlimited \$100 Individual Talk + Text starting at \$40; Unlimited \$60 Family Talk + Text + Web starting at \$80; Unlimited \$120 Individual Talk + Text starting at \$50; Unlimited \$70 Family Talk + Text + Web starting at \$80; Unlimited \$100 Individual Talk + Text starting at \$40; Unlimited \$60 Family Talk + Text + Web starting at \$80; Unlimited \$120				Free incoming text, 25¢ to send. Add ons: \$5/mo. - 250 text \$10/mo. - 750 text \$20/mo. - Unlimited Unlimited text for Family Plans \$30/mo. \$25/line Messaging & Mobile Internet \$50 Account Messaging & Mobile Internet				Add ons: \$5/mo. - 250 text \$10/mo. 500 messages - Unlimited VZ mobile to VZ mobile \$20/mo. 5000 messages - Unlimited VZ mobile to VZ mobile Talk & Text Plans starting at \$60/mo. (Single); \$100 (Family)		Text messaging and Web add-on plans: \$2.50/mo. - 100 text + 2MB data \$5/mo. - 500 text + 15MB data \$10/mo. - 1000 text + 30MB data \$20/mo. - 2000 text + 75 MB data		\$30/mo. plan includes 1000 texts. \$45/mo. plan includes unlimited texts.	
Notes	Unlimited mobile-to-mobile minutes between AT&T users. Min. rollover for up to 1 yr. Up to \$1.25 "regulatory fee" applies to all plans. Push to Talk available on Single and Family Plans. \$30 "Senior Nation" plan with 200 min. and 500 off peak min. Nation with Canada - Individual and Family plans available. Data Service can be added to plans.		Unlimited T-mobile to T-Mobile. Regulatory fee of \$1.41 per line/mo. Directory Assistance \$1.79 + airtime. Hotspots (VOIP) service available. Family Plans - If eligible - Kids are Free until 2012 (lines 3-5 share min. or are limited to 200 min. for unlimited talk plans). Add-ons - Unlimited Web plans available. Unlimited plan \$50 1000 min. plan \$40 Unlimited plan \$80 3000 min. \$80 1500 min. \$60 Individual talk plans: 1000 min. \$50 Unlimited \$60 Family talk plans: 1500 min. \$80 Unlimited \$100				Unlimited mobile-to-mobile between US Cellular customers in area for most Individual & Family Plans. Nights and Weekends minutes are unlimited on some Individual and Family plans. Free Overage Protection. 411 Directory Assistance - \$1.95 per call. Roaming packages \$10/mo. for 30 min. can be purchased. 96¢/monthly "regulatory fee." Life Line plans available. \$35 plan available with Unlimited Anytime min. ME Home Area. Unlimited talk plan \$70/mo. Unlimited National Family plan \$120/mo.				Unlimited "in-calling" among VZ Wireless customers. 99¢/monthly "regulatory fee." Push to talk available \$5/mo. Mobile Broadband available for day, week or month. 411 - \$1.99 + airtime. *Contract length depends on price of phone. \$30 Seniors "65 Plus" 200 min. Single talk: \$60 plan 900 min. Unlimited \$70/mo. Unlimited Talk \$120/mo. Plans available: Nationwide + Canada or + Mexico; & Data and Message.		Referral Program - \$10 credit. 5% discount for AARP members. Plans: \$10/mo. - 250 min. \$20/mo. - 250 min. \$30/mo. - 500 min. \$50/mo. - 1500 min. \$60/mo. - 2000 min. Reseller - uses facilities of other carriers. Reseller - uses facilities of other carriers.		\$45/mo. Plan - unlimited voice, text, web access, and 411. \$30/mo. Plan - 1000 min., 30 Mb web access and 1000 text. Minutes do not roll over. Automatic refills or on demand refills. Reseller - uses facilities of other carriers.	

FAIRPOINT'S BROADBAND EXPANSION IS COMING SOON — BUT WHERE?

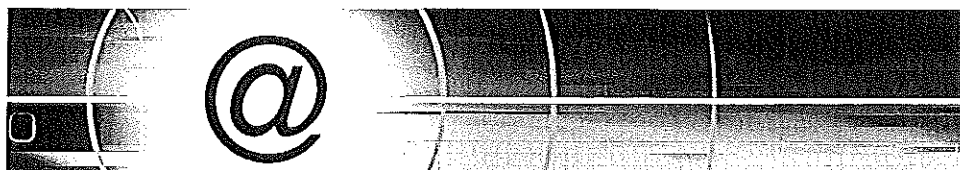
When FairPoint acquired Verizon-Maine, the Public Advocate and others negotiated many conditions of the acquisition, including an aggressive expansion of broadband service throughout the State. FairPoint soon began working on its next-generation network, but fell behind schedule even before filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in mid-2010. After new negotiations required by the bankruptcy proceedings, FairPoint's new goal is to provide DSL service to 87% of the customers in its new Maine territory, instead of 90% (Verizon left with DSL service to about 70% of its customers).

Until now, FairPoint has devoted its attention to the design and building of the core network, rather than to the last-mile connections to new customers. That stage of its broadband deployment is almost finished, and FairPoint is now working to determine where new services will be connected and turned on. The Public Advocate, and the customers we represent, have been frustrated by FairPoint's inability to provide specific information about which communities will receive new DSL service within any given time frame. FairPoint has indicated that it is unable to provide that sort of information in advance of new service availability. Because Internet services are unregulated, FairPoint retains substantial discretion in how it manages that part of its business. We expect that, by the end of 2010, all of FairPoint's central offices will be equipped to provide DSL, and that

hundreds of new remote terminals will be turned on in order to provide service to customers who live good distances from a town's center.

FAIRPOINT'S PRICE INCREASES FOR HIGH-SPEED INTERNET FairPoint raised its DSL prices to \$21/month for 768 Kbs service and \$36/month for

3 Mbs service. Those prices require a one-year contract and require also that you subscribe to FairPoint's local telephone service. In FairPoint's 'classic' independent local company territories, the current price is \$45/month for 3 Mbs service.



IS IT TIME TO UNPLUG YOUR CABLE SERVICE?

Cable TV providers such as Time Warner and Comcast offer an attractive set of three services — television, high-speed Internet, and telephone. Like FairPoint and other phone companies, the cable providers like to restrict your options by tying the price of their Internet service to their core service (TV for Cable providers, telephone for telephone companies). So if you give up your TV service, you'll pay more for Internet service, limiting your total savings.

However, there will be some savings if you decide to drop TV service or use the Internet as an alternative to your cable or satellite service. If you have a broadband Internet service and a computer (or dedicated TV streaming device) that you can dedicate to your TV, there are a growing number of television shows available over the Internet. Internet on your TV is made possible by free TV streaming services such as BoxeeTV and Joost and lots of content from sites such as Hulu, iTunes and Youtube. Movies are available for downloading from companies such as Netflix. Many TV channels also offer direct access to their shows from their own websites. Unfortunately, commercials are still part of the equation. Of course, many customers can still get free over-the air digital broadcast television with a good rooftop antenna (for a suitable antenna at your specific address, see www.antennaweb.org).

Whether or not you cancel TV service, many customers would save money by buying individual services from telephone, Internet, and cable providers, instead of bundling. For example, if you don't make a lot of long-distance phone calls or care about extra calling features, the phone bundle from the cable company or telephone company is probably costing more than the price for basic local telephone service plus a low-cost long-distance service (such as Pioneer Telephone). Unfortunately, Congress has taken no action on proposals to allow consumers to choose television channels instead of being required to take the bundles offered by cable and satellite companies.

THE BOTTOM LINE A hodgepodge of "do it yourself TV" sources is not as easy as subscribing to your cable or satellite provider, and it is more suited for those who are technologically adept. But it would save you money if you have a suitable computer and Internet connection, or if you get a good signal from over-the-air TV broadcasts. Cable rates have risen steadily, and many customers, initially lured in by low introductory rates, are finding that their cable rates are becoming unaffordable. Therefore, it could pay to check out individual prices instead of bundles, but keep in mind that your cable operator will probably raise the price of your Internet service if you drop TV service.

>> broadband internet service providers

COMPANY	AREA	PRICES
DSL HIGH SPEED INTERNET		
Aroostook Internet 800-752-4330 ainop.com	Throughout much of Maine	\$35/mo. Res. \$50/mo. Bus. Setup fee \$25 Early termination fee
Axiom Technologies 866-708-7998 axiom-tech.net	Washington & Hancock counties	\$30/mo. (res.) Bus. plans available \$80 Installation & Modem Fee
Cornerstone 207-992-4411 ccmaine.net	Western Penobscot & Southern Piscataquis Counties; Calais, and Machias	\$30 - \$40/mo. Res. \$40 - \$70 Installation fee (Bus. rates higher)
FairPoint 866-984-2001 Res. 866-984-3001 Bus. fairpoint.com	Available in much of FairPoint territory	W/existing Voice Line Month-to-Month Res. \$26/mo. 768Kb; \$40/mo. 3Mb, 1yr. commitment - \$21/mo. 768Kb; \$36/mo. 3Mb. W/out Voice Line Month-to-Month Res. \$34/mo. 768Kb; \$50/mo. 3Mb, 1yr. Commitment \$32/mo. 768Kb; \$44/mo. 3Mb. \$99 early termination fee \$20 Activation Fee \$80 Installation Fee Higher rates in FairPoint "Classic" territory
GWI 866-494-2020 gwi.net	Available in 40 exchanges within FairPoint territory (up to 3Mbs)	\$40/mo. Res. \$55/mo. Bus. No setup fee Res. Rates \$10 lower with phone bundles
Midcoast Internet 207-594-8277 midcoast.com	Most of FairPoint territory, and Tidewater Telecom area	\$35 & up in "new" FairPoint territory \$75 setup fee in FairPoint territory \$50 equipment fee \$40 & up Tidewater tel. area \$75 setup in Tidewater areas \$100 equipment fee \$99 cancellation fee within 1st year
Oxford Networks 800-520-9911 oxfordnetworks.com	Various communities throughout state	\$38/mo. Res. \$40 - \$80/mo. Bus. No setup fee
Pioneer Broadband 866-335-1254 pioneerbroadband.net	Caribou, Presque Isle, Houlton, Linneus, Machias, Calais, Millinocket, and New Limerick	\$40/mo. No setup fee
USA Telephone 888-872-9400 savewithusa.com	"new" FairPoint exchanges	\$25/mo. Res. & Bus. Must be USA Telephone customer No setup fee. Note - USA may be temporarily unable to accept new customers
CABLE MODEM HIGH SPEED INTERNET		
Bee Line Cable 800-439-4611 beeline.com/packages Internet.cfm	Skowhegan, Wilton, Madison, Industry, Anson, Farmington, Millinocket, E. Millinocket	\$30-\$63/mo. Res. \$35-\$63/mo. Bus. No installation fee
Comcast 800-266-2278 comcast.com	Berwick, So. Berwick, Eliot & Kittery, Brunswick & Freeport areas	Res. \$42/mo. (1.5 Mbs) \$60/mo. (6 Mbs) \$70/mo. (8 Mbs) Prices are \$15 lower with TV bundles. \$100 Installation fee. \$5 modem rental.
Metrocast Online 800-695-2545 metrocast.com	Acton, Lebanon, Newfield, Sanford, Shapleigh, Springvale & W. Newfield	Res. \$36-\$73/mo. \$60 Installation fee Bus. \$60 - \$350/mo. \$100 Installation fee (includes modem rental)
Pioneer Broadband 866-335-1254 pioneerbroadband.net	Bridgewater, Monticello, Littleton, Houlton, Hodgdon, Medway, and Howland	\$42/mo. Res \$55/mo. Bus. \$80 Installation fee
Time Warner Cable 800-833-2253 rr.com (Roadrunner)	Most of Maine	Res. \$35/mo. (768 Kb) \$40/mo. (1.5 Mbs) \$55/mo. (8 Mbs) \$65/mo. (15 Mbs) \$42.50 Installation fee. Lower rates with TV bundles.
WIRELESS HIGH SPEED INTERNET		
Aroostook Internet 800-752-4330 ainop.com	Houlton, St. Agatha, Fort Kent, Eagle Lake, Long Lake area/Sinclair, St Agatha, parts of St John, Soldier Pond, and Wallagrass	\$40/mo. \$125 Installation fee Early termination fee
Aroostook Technologies, Inc. 207-762-9321 atimaine.net	Aroostook County	\$40 - \$70/mo. Res. \$55 - \$85/mo. Bus. Installation Fee applies
Axiom Technologies 866-708-7998 axiom-tech.net	Washington & Hancock counties	\$40/mo. res (\$150 installation fee) Bus. Plans Available

>> broadband internet service providers cont'd

COMPANY	AREA	PRICES
Bluestreak 877-338-9015 bluestreakme.com	Belfast, Freedom, Morrill, Stockton Springs, Waldo & Searsport	\$40 - \$50/mo. Res. \$45 - \$60/mo. Bus. \$100 - 200 Installation fee
Chebeague.net 207-846-4850	Chebeague Island	\$40/mo. \$350 Installation & Equipment Fee
Cornerstone 207-992-4411 ccmaine.net	Western Penobscot & Southern Piscataquis Counties	\$40/mo. Res. \$175 Installation fee
Midcoast Internet 207-594-8277 midcoast.com	Midcoast area, Belfast to Bath	\$50/mo. (1.5 Mbps) \$90/mo. (3 Mbps) Res. & Bus. \$100 Off-island set-up fee \$200 On-island set-up fee
Pioneer Broadband 866-335-1254 pioneerbroadband.net	Much of northeast Maine from Madawaska to Machias to Howland	\$45/mo. Res. \$55/mo. Bus. \$150 Installation fee
Premium Choice 207-735-2611 premiumchoicebroadband.com	Much of Maine	\$30 - \$100/mo. Res. \$200 Installation fee \$100 Equipment \$150 - \$350/mo. Bus. \$200 Installation fee \$150 Equipment
Redzone 207-596-5700 redzonewireless.com	Available in Midcoast Maine (Thomaston/Rockland/Camden area), Mount Desert Island, Cranberry Isles, and Hermon	\$23 - \$50/mo. Res. \$35 - \$40/mo. Bus. \$50 Installation fee \$50 - \$100 Setup fee
SATELLITE HIGH SPEED INTERNET		
HughesNet (formerly Direcway) 888-667-5537 hughesnet.com	All	\$60/mo. (1 Mbs) \$70/mo. (1.2 Mbs) \$8/mo. (1.6 Mbs) \$120/mo. (2 Mbs) \$190/mo. (3 Mbs) \$400 equipment cost \$200 installation cost 2 year contract \$400 early termination fee after 30 days
SkyWay USA 866-697-5992 skywayusa.com	All	\$30/mo./ (256Kb) \$50/mo./ (512Kb) \$60/mo./ (768Kb) \$80/mo./ (1.5Mb) \$149 equipment \$25 Activation Fee \$150 Installation 1 yr. contract Early termination fee is prorated
Starband 800-478-2722 starband.com	All	\$50/mo./ (512Kb) \$70/mo. (1Mb) \$100/mo./ (1.5Mb) all plans require 2 yr. contract \$300 equipment cost Request estimate installation fee \$500 termination fee if cancelled w/in 1st yr of contract
WildBlue 866-945-3258 wildblue.com	All	\$50/mo. (up to 512 Kbs) \$70/mo. (up to 1.0 Mbs) \$80/mo. (up to 1.5 Mbs) \$6/mo. lease equip. fee w/2 year contract \$150 Activation Fee Early termination is prorated

Note - Mbs = megabits per second Kbs = kilobits per second (1 Mb is approximately 1000 times greater than 1 Kb)

MOBILE BROADBAND (FROM CELLULAR CARRIERS)			
COMPANY	LAPTOP BROADBAND MONTHLY FEE	PRICE OF LAPTOP CARD	SMARTPHONE BROADBAND MONTHLY FEE
AT&T 800-888-7600 wireless.att.com	\$40 w/WiFi service	Free (promotion) or starting at \$50 w/2 year contract \$36 activation fee \$175 early termination fee	Starting at \$35 with eligible calling plan \$40 or higher
T-Mobile 800-937-8997 tmobile.com	\$60	Free (promotion) w/2yr. contract or \$150 no annual contract \$35 activation fee \$200 early termination fee	Starting at \$30 with eligible calling plan \$30 or higher
US Cellular 888-944-9400 uscc.com	\$60	Promotion \$10 w/\$50 mail-in rebate w/2 year contract	Starting at \$40 with eligible calling plan \$50 or higher
Verizon 800-256-4646 verizonwireless.com	\$40	Starting at \$50 w/2 yr. contract \$35 activation fee \$175 early termination fee	Starting at \$30 with eligible calling plan \$40 or higher

FEDERAL GRANT FOR MAINE'S "3-RING BINDER" PROJECT SHOULD SPEED UP BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT

The "3 Ring Binder" project is "middle mile" telecommunications infrastructure. Large telecommunications companies like AT&T, Verizon, cable companies, and others control much of the U.S. based Internet backbone, while "last mile" retail Internet service providers (ISP) charge you a monthly fee to provide a "last mile" Internet connection to your home or business. In Maine, one of the key roadblocks to the expansion of Internet service has been an infrastructure that is inadequate to allow efficient routing of Internet traffic between local ISPs in rural areas and the Internet backbone. To improve Maine's connectivity, the 3-Ring Binder project was designed and proposed by a group including the University of Maine and GWI.

The federal government, as part of the recent stimulus program, has awarded \$25.4 million for this project, supplemented by private investment of \$7.5 million from Maine Fiber Company, which will own and operate the facility. Maine Fiber is constructing a new fiber-optic network that will run 1100 miles through some of Maine's most rural areas, to be completed in 2012. When completed, Maine Fiber will lease these fiber-optic facilities to retail ISPs or to other carriers or businesses that want to supplement their networks.

This new fiber optic-cable will be used to enable Internet services in a number of ways, including:

- Connecting to new remote terminals (outdoor cabinets) that will serve new customers who are presently too far from phone company offices
- Connect wireless towers to the Internet backbone
- Connecting small phone company offices to the Internet backbone
- Potential fiber to the home for advanced services, as well as advanced services for business, educational, government, public safety, and healthcare organizations.

Maine Fiber will charge low uniform rates in a non-discriminatory manner, with open access to any company in need of the facilities. When available, this new Maine infrastructure should speed up broadband expansion throughout the State.

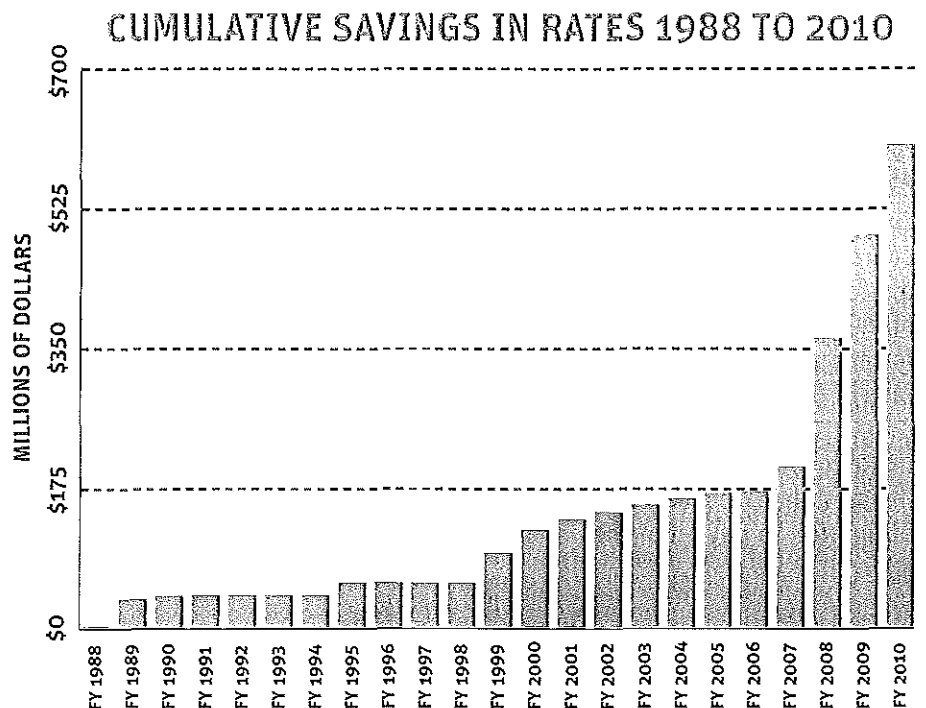
TOOTING OUR OWN HORN DEPARTMENT...

Look How Much Money the Public Advocate Has Saved Maine's Utility Customers!

The following chart shows over \$620 million in savings that the Public Advocate has achieved for Maine ratepayers since we began keeping track in 1989. As the accompanying chart shows, we have been especially effective in saving money for customers in recent years. These totals reflect our work for customers of electricity, telecommunications, natural gas, and water services. We take credit for savings only if we were the only party advocating for the result that was achieved. We also help customers achieve substantial savings by providing information and advice to customers, including the information contained in this publication and in our Electricity Guide. In addition to the direct savings that we produce, the Public Advocate works with the State Legislature, the PUC and Federal agencies, advocating for policies that enhance consumer protection while expanding or maintaining quality utility services. Finally, we assist hundreds of individual consumers each year who ask for our help in resolving disputes or navigating the regulatory process.

The Public Advocate receives no taxpayer funding — we are funded entirely by required assessments from public utilities.

Based on our current annual budget of \$1.7 million, we are a pretty good deal for the people of Maine.



FairPoint's Local Telephone Service Rates Decreasing Again As a Result of Service Quality Penalties

At the time of FairPoint's acquisition of Verizon-Maine, the Public Advocate pressed for a meaningful service quality program that would result in rebates to customers if FairPoint failed to meet reasonable customer service standards. Of course, as it turned out, FairPoint did fail to meet various standards after its operational systems performed poorly. Since then, in the face of FairPoint's attempts to avoid portions of such penalties, the Public Advocate has, in various cases, insisted that FairPoint honor its obligation to pay all of the penalties

that have accumulated as a result of the problems that its customers have suffered. Most recently, in mid-November, the Public Utilities Commission agreed with us that FairPoint should have to pay basic service quality penalties plus the "multiplier" effect that is applicable to consecutive years of poor performance. While FairPoint argued that the problems were beyond its control, we argued that all of the decisions leading to its poor customer service were decisions made by FairPoint. The buck has to stop there.

As a result, customers are already seeing service quality rebates that decrease their telephone bills and now, those discounts will increase. The current rebate is \$1.72 per month, due to expire in February. However, the balance of that older penalty will be spread out for an additional 12 months resulting in a \$.43 per month rebate. In addition, the new 2009-2010 penalty will be over \$9 million dollars, increasing the rebate by \$2.18 per month, for a total rebate of \$2.61 per month on FairPoint local telephone bills for the next 12 months, through November 2011.