

Comcast raising cable TV rates again

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Comcast cable television subscribers in the Bay Area will see their monthly bill increase an average of 4.5 percent Oct. 1.

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The increase will not affect customers who combine cable video with Comcast's broadband or telephone services. Video-only customers account for about 15 percent of subscribers in the Bay Area, the company said.

For example, standard cable subscribers will see their bills increase from about \$53.38 to \$57.

Comcast spokesman Andrew Johnson attributed the rate increase to rising costs, including gas prices, health care, programming fees, and technology and service improvements.

"The company spends about \$6 billion a year on programming to give our customers the best content and the most video choices," Johnson said. "While we have been aggressive at controlling costs, we expect continued increases in programming, particularly in sports."

The cable TV rate increase has become a yearly occurrence for Comcast subscribers. Last November, cable-only subscribers saw their monthly bill increase by 5 percent. Johnson said this one is still below the rate of inflation.

But Mindy Spatt, spokeswoman for The Utility Reform Network, said the fact that prices are not going up for the company's bundled service shows that Comcast is pressuring people to subscribe to packages.

"It's part of a trend that's quite clear," Spatt said. "They're raising rates on individual service to push people to bundles because that means they get more money. But the reality is now consumers have fewer and fewer choices."

Johnson said the large number of people who order packages indicates that consumers are happy with the value they get from combining services.

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