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Atlantic Broadband's residential customers in the Aiken (SC) and the surrounding area should be finding it easier to surf, stream, work and play games online at the same time. The nation's ninth-largest cable operator increased Internet speeds and doubled the download speeds for most of the users in its services at no additional cost Tuesday, according to a press release. "Our customers are multitasking every day on more than a dozen connected devices in the home, so reliable, high-performance Internet is essential," said Debbie Eblen, Atlantic Broadband's vice president and general manager in South Carolina. "We are pleased to continue our investment in broadband technology to meet these needs while providing super fast Internet speeds and enhanced value for our customers." – *Aiken (SC) Standard*

Spectrum TV's digital upgrade for customers in the Columbus (OH) area is coming down to its final few weeks. All areas of the Columbus market should be hooked up to digital by the end of July, spokesman Michael Pedelty said. "The Columbus area is 90 percent complete. Westerville, Worthington (and) Bexley will be completed in the next couple of weeks," Pedelty said.

The upgrade to digital launched in April and has focused on different areas of Columbus upgrading each week. The goal of going all-digital in Columbus and removing analog signals allows Spectrum to offer faster internet speeds, more HD and On Demand options, officials at Spectrum owner Charter Communications have said.

A key point in making the process go smoothly was that the vast majority of customers already have adopted digital devices for at least one television in their homes, he said. Only those television sets that had been connected directly to the cable outlet on the wall needed a digital receiver. In other parts of Ohio, when the digital upgrade occurred, there was confusion, frustration and even some outrage, according to news reports. In an attempt to prevent such issues, Spectrum notified customers about upgrade dates via direct mail, bill messages, phone calls and messages that appeared on their televisions.

In addition, Columbus was one of the last of the former Time Warner Cable markets to get the complete upgrade, "and (Spectrum owner) Charter has done it a lot, so they brought a real focus to it," Pedelty said. "Having said that, you're impacting the network when you do this, so things can happen. But by and large, it's been extremely smooth — especially when you consider we are completely upgrading the network from analog to digital."

The faster internet speeds resulting from the upgrade are an important feature as Spectrum tries to answer the challenge of competitors wooing dissatisfied subscribers who have "cut the cord," said telecommunications analyst Jeff Kagan. "Going forward, the internet is how companies will bring television to customers," Kagan said. "Charter is following Comcast, AT&T and Verizon in making this upgrade."

Even cord-cutters still need internet access if they want to watch more than local over-the-air stations, which means that total price even for TV service delivered via the internet can be close to a standard cable fee. Spectrum is attempting to answer customer desire for “a la carte” selections with Spectrum TV Choice, which offers local broadcast channels plus a choice of 10 popular national networks from a list of 65 that includes such standard cable fare as CNN, Discovery, ESPN, Fox News, HGTV, Lifetime, Nickelodeon, TBS and USA, among others. – ***Columbus Dispatch***

The U.K. government said it won't oppose a bid by Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox Inc. to consolidate ownership of Sky, removing the last regulatory hurdle for Fox as it battles it out with Comcast Corp. for the British broadcaster.

**Fox sweetened its offer for Sky on Wednesday**, triggering a higher bid a few hours later from Comcast. Comcast's offer, at £14.75 a share, now values Sky at £25.9 billion, or roughly \$34 billion—more than 90% higher than its value before Fox first approached Sky about a deal more than 18 months ago. British government approval for the Fox-Sky deal opens the door for Fox to go higher still. Comcast has previously secured U.K. approval to proceed with its pursuit of Sky.

Mr. Murdoch's attempt to buy the 61% of Sky that Fox doesn't already own has been the subject of a long government review. Regulators forced a number of concessions from Fox, including an agreement to sell off Sky's news operations to Walt Disney Co. That was required to ease government concerns 100% ownership of Sky by Fox would concentrate too much control of British news media in Mr. Murdoch's hands. He and his family are major shareholders in both Fox and News Corp, which owns a number of British newspapers. It also owns The Wall Street Journal. Fox has disputed this, saying there should be no such worry about media ownership concentration.

On Thursday, the U.K. culture minister said in a statement he agreed with a regulatory board's previous finding that Fox's planned sale of Sky News to Disney, or another buyer, would remedy those regulatory concern. The Sky auction has become a central battlefield in a larger contest between Comcast and Disney. **Disney has agreed to pay \$71.3 billion** for a number of major Fox assets, including the existing 39.1% share of Sky, besting a rival bid from Comcast. The Wall Street Journal has reported Comcast is reviewing a range of options related the wider basket of Fox assets, from dropping out of the race for Fox to raising its bid. – ***Wall Street Journal***; **more from Philadelphia Inquirer**



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