

Netgear to help Internet subscribers measure use

July 20 2009, By PETER SVENSSON , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- How many gigabytes do you consume per month? Not many people can answer that question, complicating the efforts of Internet service providers to get their subscribers to stay below a certain amount of data per month.

In August, Netgear Inc. plans to introduce a \$190 router that will provide the first easy way for users to get a grip on their [Internet traffic](#).

Netgear said it will include the feature on future models, eventually making it a standard, and provide software upgrades for older devices.

Most Internet service providers set a limit for how much their subscribers are allowed to download each month. Those limits are mostly set high - it's 250 gigabytes per month at [Comcast](#) Corp. But some ISPs, led by Time Warner Cable Inc., have tried to set low limits, then charge extra for each gigabyte of data beyond the cap.

That has met with a lot of opposition, not least because most consumers have no idea how many gigabytes they consume each month. In April, Time Warner said it was postponing plans to expand a trial of metered billing beyond Beaumont, Texas, where it continues.

[Time Warner Cable](#) tried to educate its users by giving them a Web page where they could track their consumption. Netgear's routers will give owners a way to monitor their usage independently. The users can read the data in their Web browsers and could get customized alerts at certain

levels.

Data-monitoring software already is available for PCs, but with game consoles, TV set-top boxes, iPhones and other devices now also connecting to the Internet, the PC software gives an incomplete picture of consumption in many households. Measuring at the router - through which all Internet traffic flows - captures it all. (It's possible to track consumption on certain routers by replacing the manufacturer's software with third-party packages, but it's a step for the technologically savvy.)

At another major maker of home routers, [Cisco Systems](#) Inc.'s Linksys division, spokeswoman Karen Sohl said consumption monitoring is "being looked at."

On the Net:

Netgear WNDR3700 [router](http://bit.ly/exnCe): <http://bit.ly/exnCe>

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