

AT&T rolls out 3G MicroCell device in Charlotte

October 7 2009, By Victor Godinez

AT&T's new device is what's known as a femtocell: a machine that plugs into your existing high-speed Internet connection and then broadcasts a cell phone signal throughout your house (or office or mountain lair, etc.). You then make and receive calls on your phone as usual, but the femtocell actually routes your calls over the Internet to your wireless carrier's network.

The goal of these devices is to provide solid coverage in buildings where coverage is currently limited or non-existent.

Many companies have already started selling these devices, but many of them only provide 2G or slower networks.

So AT&T is getting set to launch its 3G MicroCell, a femtocell which, as the name implies, provides a 3G signal to AT&T customers with 3G phones.

The company has just launched the MicroCell in Charlotte as a test market before a national launch, so one lucky iPhone owner in Charlotte decided to give the machine a whirl and post his impressions.

He loves it:

"I've had several calls on my phone since switching and the difference is night and day. Before my phone wouldn't even ring half the time and I'd just get a voicemail notification. That hasn't happened at all. Clarity

seems to be the same as a normal call. No problems either switching to and from the MicroCell."

Right now, AT&T is selling the MicroCell in Charlotte for \$150 with no additional monthly fee if you just want to stick to your current monthly minute plan. You also can upgrade to unlimited minutes on the MicroCell for \$20 a month. However, if you also subscribe to AT&T Internet or landline voice service, the cost for unlimited minutes drops to \$10/month. And if you subscribe to both AT&T Internet and landline voice, the unlimited MicroCell minutes are free.

Again, those are the prices in the Charlotte test market, but they'll likely stay the same for the upcoming national rollout.

And while the MicroCell won't fix any wireless reception problems you have while you're out and about, it does sound like a good option for 3G users who get dodgy reception at home.

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