

# AT&T: Tighter control of cell data usage ahead

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(AP) -- Wireless data hogs who jam the airwaves by watching video on their iPhones will be put on tighter leashes, an AT&T Inc. executive said Wednesday.

The carrier has had trouble keeping up with wireless data usage, leading to dropped connections and long waits for users trying to run programs on their devices. AT&T is upgrading its network to cope, but its head of consumer services, Ralph de la Vega, told investors at a UBS conference in New York that it will also give high-bandwidth users incentives to "reduce or modify their usage."

De la Vega didn't say exactly how or when the carrier would change its policies, but he said some form of usage-based pricing for data is inevitable.

Right now, the carrier doesn't limit data usage for smart phones. It also doesn't make it easy for subscribers to know how much data they're consuming.

"We need to educate the customer ... We've got to get them to understand what represents a megabyte of data," de la Vega said. "We're improving all our systems to let consumers get real-time information on their data usage."

Just 3 percent of "smart" phone users are consuming 40 percent of the network capacity, de la Vega said, adding that the most high-bandwidth

activity is video and audio streaming. Several applications on the [iPhone](#) provide nonstop Internet radio.

De la Vega also defended the network's performance, saying testing showed that AT&T's third-generation, or 3G, network was faster than that of competitors, and that major problems are concentrated in New York and San Francisco, which are packed with smart phone users.

AT&T is locked in a TV ad war with Verizon Wireless, which is touting its wider [3G network](#) coverage. The two recently agreed to drop two lawsuits about their dueling claims.

(This version corrects that AT&T doesn't limit data usage on phones. 5-gigabyte limit applies to data cards.)

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