

Fox grants 'brief extension' in cable dispute

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In this advertisement released by Time Warner Cable, a warning that FOX has threatened to pull the plug on Time Warner Cable customers at midnight, New Year's Eve, unless the cable company gives in to demands for massive price increases.(AP Photo/Time Warner Cable)

(AP) -- Fox and Time Warner Cable extended their contract for a few hours, avoiding a threatened blackout of several stations from the cable provider while the two sides tried early Friday to resolve a disagreement over fees.

Time Warner Cable Inc. made the announcement as the clock rolled past

midnight Thursday on the East Coast. In a brief statement at 5:30 a.m. EST Friday, Scott Grogin, Fox senior vice president for communications, said "we are still negotiating."

The extension for a few hours made it appear likely that at the very least a further extension would be granted, allowing millions of [cable subscribers](#) access to Friday's Sugar Bowl between the Florida Gators and the Cincinnati Bearcats. The Cotton Bowl on Saturday, the NFL's final regular season contests on Sunday and "The Simpsons" and other Fox shows were also at risk.

Karen Amaya, a 30-year-old schoolteacher and Time Warner Cable subscriber in Van Nuys, Calif., said she was concerned about not being able to see "The Simpsons" on Sunday night, which her husband watches "religiously."

She said it was "kind of frustrating" not knowing what would happen, especially as both sides had heavily advertised the possible disruption.

Fox had threatened to pull the signal from 14 TV stations it owns, a move that would have affected more than 6 million customers of Time Warner Cable and Bright House Networks in New York, Los Angeles, Orlando, Fla., and other markets.

If the signal were dropped on cable, people could tune into Fox with an antenna if they have a [digital TV](#) or converter box. But most Americans these days get broadcast channels through subscription services such as cable TV or satellite.

Six Fox [cable channels](#), including FX, Speed and Fuel, and certain regional sports networks were still being distributed throughout the Time Warner Cable and Bright House service territories. Carriage arrangements on those channels weren't to expire until Thursday at

midnight PST (3 a.m. EST).

The dispute focuses on how much Fox is paid by cable companies to retransmit its stations' signals. Time Warner Cable and a smaller cable TV operator, Bright House Networks, have resisted paying a new \$1 monthly fee per subscriber that News Corp. is demanding from both operators.

Time Warner Cable CEO Glenn Britt has called the fee demand excessive and said the cable operator has reached deals for "much lower" rates with Fox affiliates - stations that carry Fox programming but are owned by other companies.

Fox has said it needs subscription revenue to supplement the advertising revenues that have supported its broadcast network up until now.

Separately, Sinclair Broadcasting Group, which owns broadcast stations in markets as large as Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, agreed to an eight-day extension for cable TV operator Mediacom Communications Corp. to carry Sinclair's Fox and CBS stations. Mediacom will pay Sinclair a higher rate than it was paying under a contract that also was expiring at midnight Thursday.

In another fee dispute, Cablevision Systems Corp. said early Friday that it had failed to reach a deal to continue carrying HGTV and Food Network for its 3.1 million subscribers in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, adding it had no expectation of carrying the signals again.

The channels are owned by Cincinnati-based Scripps Networks Interactive Inc.

[Time Warner Cable](#) continued to carry Food Network and Great American Country under a temporary deal extension as its talks with

Scripps also continued late into the night.

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