

Verizon lets FiOS customers sign up month-to-month

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(AP) -- Verizon Communications Inc. is offering its FiOS television and broadband Internet package to new customers without a long-term contract.

The company said it wants to be more competitive with cable TV companies, which typically sell services on a month-to-month basis and had mocked Verizon's contract requirements in ads. Contracts are more common with cell phone services.

"Our competitors focused on fear in their promos instead of the merit of the product," said Bob Elek, spokesman for Verizon. "For some customers the length of the contract was a major barrier but now they won't have to worry about that."

FiOS is still small compared with cable. Verizon has about 3 million television customers, compared with nearly 62 million that cable TV providers collectively have. FiOS is currently available in 13 states, and the company is aggressively trying to cut into the cable business where it offers FiOS service.

Verizon had previously charged \$20 more per month for the no-contract service. Now, new FiOS customers will be able to get contract-free service at the regular price of \$99 per month, plus taxes and fees. Existing customers, however, will still be subject to the contracts - and to termination fees for ending the service early.

Verizon is offering a two-year price guarantee for new customers who sign contracts anyway, with 30 days to cancel without penalties. For month-to-month customers, the price will be locked for only the first year.

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