

# Cable company inserts ads as subscribers surf

March 3 2011, By PETER SVENSSON , AP Technology Writer

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In this screen shot provided by Matt Thomas, a Mediacom Communications Corp. Internet ad for home phone service is displayed on the Apple.com website.(AP Photo/Matt Thomas) NO SALES

(AP) -- Mediacom Communications Corp., a cable company with more than 800,000 Internet subscribers, has tried something other U.S. Internet service providers have shied away from: It has inserted its own ads into Web pages as its subscribers surfed.

Ads for Mediacom's home phone service have shown up on the normally ad-free home pages of [Google.com](http://Google.com) and [Apple.com](http://Apple.com), according to subscribers.

There are only a few reports of the ads showing up, starting last week,

and many Mediacom subscribers on Web forums said they had not seen any. That leaves the possibility that the ads were part of a test run rather than a full-fledged rollout.

The company won't say. Spokesman Thomas Larsen said the company's senior vice president of technology was unavailable for comment. On the company's Web forum, a complaining subscriber is told by a Mediacom representative that the issue has been "escalated to the corporate office and we are still investigating."

Mediacom, which is based in Middletown, N.Y., has subscribers in scattered areas, mainly in the Midwest and Southeast.

Matt Thomas, a Mediacom subscriber in Baldwin County, Ala., said he first saw an ad a week ago, on Apple.com. At first, he thought his computer might have been infected with some virus-like software that inserts ads. Then he realized it was coming from his [Internet service provider](#), the [cable company](#).

"I'm a designer and a creative director for a Web development company, so the idea of an ISP injecting ads onto a Web page is horrifying to me as a designer," Thomas said. "Especially with something like Apple.com, which never has ads on it. It's kind of like they're putting ads on HBO or Showtime, in my eyes."

He saw a button to decline ads in the future and clicked it. He hasn't seen one since. Because the company is silent, it's not known if it's planning to offer some sort of incentive to customers who agree to see ads.

Thomas and other users first reported their experiences on [Broadbandreports.com](#).

PerfTech Inc., a company in San Antonio, Texas, sells a system that

allows cable companies to insert messages in Web pages seen by subscribers. Besides serving ads, the system can alert subscribers to emergencies or let them know if they're approaching their data consumption limits, according to PerfTech's website. It says five of North America's top cable companies, unnamed, are customers. PerfTech officials were in a meeting and not immediately available to comment.

Rogers Communications, a Canadian [cable company](#), inserts notices into [Web pages](#) to warn subscribers that they're approaching their monthly data limits.

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Citation: Cable company inserts ads as subscribers surf (2011, March 3) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-03-cable-company-inserts-ads-subscribers.html>

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