

Cuba denies previously reported WiFi rollout

January 13 2015

Cuba will not begin offering wireless service despite reports of a planned WiFi rollout in its second-largest city, Santiago de Cuba, state-run telecommunications provider Etecsa said Tuesday.

Cuba, where the Internet is largely limited to government offices and pricey pay-by-the-hour access at cafes and hotels, allows only some locals such as journalists, doctors and athletes to have Internet at home.

But anyone who wants their own router for a WiFi signal needs permission from the Communications Ministry first.

Etecsa clarified that a new "intranet" WiFi service was being installed but would only be available at select official sites, such as a city recreational center and a network of youth cyber clubs.

As for wider [wireless service](#), the information was "false and had not been issued by the company," Etecsa said in a statement published in state-run newspaper Granma.

The Union of Cuban Journalists, a government association, had reported on its website that wireless service would become available this month in a limited rollout in Santiago de Cuba at \$4.50 per hour.

More than 100 public Internet cafes offer access at around the same price, a rate that is largely unaffordable for most Cubans, whose average salary is \$20 per month.

For around \$6 per hour, wireless Internet service is available in Cuban hotels for international tourists and Cubans willing to pay the steep price.

Last year, 3.4 percent of homes in Cuba had Internet access, one of the world's lowest rates, according to international technology authorities.

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