HCC Bits & Bytes

HoodCanal COMMUNICATIONS

Internet is #1

It's no secret that technology is changing at an ever-faster rate. Over the last few decades, the communications landscape has changed dramatically. In the nineties, additional phone lines for dial-up internet and fax machines were all the rage (who can forget the classic dialing in and subsequent handshake sound the modems made). Continuous redial was an actual calling feature that HCC sold to get through to all those busy phone lines. Then came Digital Subscriber Lines (DSL) which gave consumers an always-on internet connection that didn't tie up their phone line.

Meanwhile, on the coax or cable side of the industry, cable modems were beginning to hit the market. However, to work in the field that technology had stricter requirements than traditional cable TV. HCC implemented these system upgrades and maintenance and then launched one-way cable modem internet. It used the coax for the downstream (what you're viewing) and a phone line for the upstream (your request for what you want to view). The service worked great for several years but the internet and how we use it kept advancing. Cable modem service that used upstream and downstream over the coax was successfully launched by HCC after additional system upgrades.

Hauling all of this data back and forth required more and more fiber to be deployed to feed the company backbone and network. The two thousands saw the installation of the first HCC owned Fiber to the Home (FTTH) project at the Squaxin Island Tribe. Fiber is now the gold standard for new high-speed internet construction projects. But where does this leave the legacy systems that HCC uses? Let's get back to that in a moment.

Today, we go online to do everything. Want to listen to music- go online. Need to schedule a car repair appointment- go online. Have a fever and want to avoid a trip to the doctor's office- go online. Need to stock up on pet food but don't want to pack the bulky bags home- go online. You may even ask Alexa, Google, Cortana, or Siri to help you with these tasks. All of this means that you need faster downstream and upstream speeds.

All of the areas that HCC serves are fed by fiber. The cable (coax) plant areas are actually HFC, Hybrid Fiber Coax, and have a lot of frequency that could be used for faster internet speeds. However, we currently have 65 analog TV channels (our Basic Cable Lineup) riding over that frequency range. In order to free up that space, for faster internet speeds, we have to boot out the analog channels and convert to an all-digital cable system. We already broadcast the Basic Cable Lineup in the digital format as part of our Premier Cable Lineup. But, in order for Basic Cable customers to tune in to these channels a DTA (Digital Terminal Adapter) will be required on each TV in their home after the migration has started. This will improve the picture quality and provide the ability to add enhanced features for Basic Cable customers in the future. Preferred Cable customers will be able to use their current cable boxes like normal.

The majority of cable companies have already transitioned to an all-digital cable platform. HCC started down this path in 2017 but tapped the brakes when the costs became too prohibitive. HCC's goal is to always try to minimize the financial impact on our customers. However, in 2018 we are going to forge ahead with the all-digital cable migration. As the internet continues to cement its position as the number one service, HCC is diligently working to finalize our migration plan. So, stay tuned for more information.

Etc...

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