📄 Comcast blocks Bit Torrent traffic

*by **highlandcynic** posted on October 23, 2007 11:14 am*

Nationwide testing in the U.S. revealed that Comcast, the second largest 'Net provider in the US, is blocking certain kinds of traffic on its network infrastructure. Specifically, Comcast is targeting various forms of Peer to Peer (P2P) traffic. Comcast spokesman Charlie Douglas says "Comcast does not block access to any applications, including BitTorrent." However, Associated Press tests show Comcast will block or delay uploads of complete files across Bit Torrent links, and downloads are apparently unaffected. Of course, the upload for one user is seen as a download by the other. So, it's a bit like saying we allow incoming calls but not outgoing calls. Well, if you're both on that same network, you can't call each other at all.

Comcast is reported to
block the traffic by injecting an error condition that makes the PC at each end of the connection believe the other terminated the transfer. Comcast claims the measure is necessary to prevent its system from being overloaded. Most attempts at traffic management involve throttling bandwidth by prioritizing certain types of traffic over others. Comcast is actually blocking traffic, something that clearly has implications with regard to Net Neutrality.

For more, please see the Associated Press article.

Highland Cynic's Opinion

Traffic management or bandwidth throttling is something that has been coming for a while now. Many corporate networks throttle bandwidth to prevent business data links being swamped by the traffic of idle cubical inhabitants surfing and streaming media content. Many ISPs already do this to some extent by giving a higher priority to some types of traffic and a lower priority to others. So, while you can browse Amazon easily, it may take a little while longer for your update from Microsoft to finish. If ISPs did not do this, then it's entirely possible that a spike in Bit Torrent activity could suffer the equivalent of a denial of service attack. Surfing and e-mail would be effectively interrupted, simply because there's no available bandwidth.

However, that is not the same as blocking transfers completely. It's not like Comcast is blocking only during peak demand; it's blocking all transfers of a particular type. Treating data differently based on the data type goes against the grain of the concept of the Internet, which is a means of getting data from A to B. Most people consider their ISP agreements to be little more than bandwidth agreements. If ISPs start aggressively limiting or blocking certain kinds of 'Net traffic, the character of the Internet changes considerably.

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1 **warthan58** @ *Oct 23 2007 2:09pm*

There have been other indications that ComCast will limit the "unlimited internet" that they sell; but they usually only interrupt people that are using an incredible amount of throughput, like the equivalent of downloading 100 DVD's per day.

Bit Torrent traffic is mostly used for pirating software and media; though, there are a handful of legitimate uses. I can understand the decision to limit it's availability.

2 **oakweb** @ *Feb 05 2008 9:12am*

I was blocked as well, and this is very unfortunate for consumers outside the USA. I can suggest a VPN solution.

I was able to get back on the site by using a American VPN service like http://www.strongvpn.com

With a VPN you can continue to use Skype and Torrent. Make sure you go with a company with unlimited bandwidth. I was with a couple others that didn't. StrongVPN is, and it's fast.

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