

**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **Broadband Speed and the Consumer**

*By Dick Sjoberg*

How much speed are you buying in your current broadband package and are you getting what you pay for? The FCC recently released the results of a national survey that shows just how large the information gap is when it comes to broadband. According to the survey, fully 80 percent of Americans with broadband at home don't know what speed they're getting. The survey was done through a major firm and drew on a national sample of three thousand consumers. The survey found that fifty percent of fixed broadband customers were very satisfied with their service overall, and forty-one percent were somewhat satisfied. Only six percent were "not too" satisfied, and three percent were not satisfied at all.

IMPACT 20/20 Taskforce for Broadband – a regional effort to increase high-speed Internet access – encourages consumers to increase their understanding of what broadband speed they need, based on the applications they want to run. Understanding your needs will help you to get the best service at the best value. If you only do email and some light Web surfing, you really only need the minimum package offered. For the heavier user who might be streaming a movie on occasion or who has children in the house sharing a connection, a middle level of service might be more appropriate. If you are a serious gamer or like to stream HD quality movie, can you get enough bandwidth?

If you think that you have the right level of service but it doesn't seem to do everything you think it should, you might have a problem with your equipment. For example, your router might be slowing things up. If you have multiple computers in your home, test each one. Sometimes, the version of software or virus protection may be at fault. And, if you have a wireless router, be sure to secure it with a password so "hitchhikers" don't use it for free and in the process, use your bandwidth. Also, it is important to keep your anti-virus program current. Viruses and other automated "malware" can be using your bandwidth as well as compromising your computer's security.

In addition, broadband service providers need to advertise their speeds in clear terms, and consumers need to be assured that the speeds they actually receive match what's advertised. Broadband delivered via a cable modem or through fiber optics tend to maintain their

advertised speeds throughout the system. Other systems tend to become slower as you move away from the central office or transmitting tower. If you have any questions about your service, contact your provider. They are there to help.

An increasing number of services will be available via the Internet. Don't be left out. If you are not currently on the Internet and would like to be, contact a local provider to learn more about the services that are available and any training they might offer that will help you to maximize your Internet experience.

*Dick Sjoberg is President of Sjoberg's Inc. in Thief River Falls and a member of the IMPACT 20/20 Taskforce for Broadband. For more information about IMPACT 20/20 and their efforts to increase access to high-speed broadband in Northwest Minnesota, visit [www.impact2020.org](http://www.impact2020.org).*