



VERIZON INTERNET & CABLE IN THE PENINSULA

Peninsula residents have recently had many questions and complaints concerning Verizon and issues with internet connectivity. Several have called Legum & Norman to take care of the issues with Verizon. Others have posted in social media in search of solutions. As a result, there is a great degree of frustration and misinformation in the community.

This bulletin from the Peninsula Tech Committee will hopefully provide Community residents with: (1) basic information about the Peninsula Verizon cable and internet package. (2) a better understanding of the connectivity issues, and (3) practical suggestions for how to address them.

VERIZON “BULK SERVICE” Community Agreement

The original developer of the Peninsula signed an agreement with Verizon in which Verizon became the sole and “exclusive” provider of cable and internet services in the community. This is a long-term agreement that has many years left. Under the terms of the Agreement Verizon provides a cable and internet “package” to every home. The cost is included in your PCA fees every quarter. The current package provides Internet speeds of 50/50 (50mgs download speed and 50mgs upload speed). It also includes a basic cable package of channels. Each home is also provided with an internet router without having to rent or purchase it.

Every homeowner can upgrade their service by increasing their internet, adding channel packages, upgrading their cable box to add DVR service, and additional cable boxes for other rooms. Homeowners pay for these additional services and equipment by setting up an account with Verizon.

Our Community Agreement with Verizon is not unusual as they have several communities throughout the Country where they are the sole and exclusive service provider and they refer to this a “Bulk Service” agreement. To service these communities Verizon created a special Bulk Service Customer Service (CS) department with a dedicated number to call for service and equipment upgrades as well as technical and repair issues. The Bulk Services number is 800-501-1172.

Having a dedicated customer service department is generally a good thing – it provides us with personnel that understands the breakdown of the services in our community (e.g., what equipment is included in our community package which makes upgrading much easier). It doesn’t guarantee that they will be able to address every issue we have, but between the CS department and the dedicated repair techs, they generally do a good job.

We had a fiber tear (week of 9/21/20) caused by a construction crew working on a new house in Marina Bay. The tear required Verizon to replace the whole fiber section which restored service community wide but did leave some homes with lingering intermittent outages, most if not all have now been taken care of. On a positive note, what the tear did do was expose issues with older out of date equipment that needs to be replaced.

We recommend the following actions.

ACTION #1: Replace Your Outdoor Verizon Box - Mooring, Veranda, Conservancy

Since the original hardware equipment was installed technology has changed and the old outdoor boxes on homes in these neighborhoods need to be changed to newer boxes capable of handling the higher frequencies Verizon is delivering. There is no cost and it involves a call to the dedicated CS number. You may have to be insistent in explaining that your home and the equipment is over 10 years old and that you are having issues. You shouldn't have an issue getting them to send a tech to do this, but if you do let a Tech Committee member know.

ACTION #2: Upgrade Your Verizon Router - ALL Peninsula residents

Your home router is the largest piece of the internet speed puzzle. The internet signal comes into the router and the router distributes or broadcasts that "wireless" signal throughout the home. Unless you have ethernet connections set up (direct connections from the router via a cable) this is the way your devices receive a signal and connect. Router technology has come a long way in the last 10 years and Verizon has upgraded their routers but many homes in the Peninsula are still using old routers. Old routers do not broadcast internet signals as far, as fast, or as efficiently as the newer models. Therefore it is a MUST that homeowners make sure they have the most up to date router available.

Take a look at your router, you will probably have one of two models. Either a black and red upright model with two antennas or a slim black upright triangular model. **The model with the antennas is very old and needs replacement ASAP.** The other model is the Quantum, it is a decent router and you may not be having any issues and are happy with the speeds you are getting. If so, you can just stay with that router, but Verizon recently introduced their newest and most advanced router.

The newest router is the G-3100, it is white cylinder (about the size of a 5 LB bag of sugar). This new router will make a big difference in the quality of your internet signal, so our recommendation is to make the switch. You simply have to call Verizon (Bulk Service number) and request the newest router. There should be little or no cost. They will either send it or you can pick it up at the Verizon store in Millsboro. It's very easy to install but if you have questions reach out to one of the Tech committee members.

ACTION #3: Know What Your Internet Speed Is

An internet wireless signal degrades the further it gets from the router. You may have a 50/50mg speed package, that's the speed right at the router but depending on your home layout, you might have rooms where the signal might be reduced to as little as 10-15mg. In these areas your connection will seem very slow, if you have a TV there, the streaming channels will sometimes buffer (that spinning circle with frozen picture).

It is very helpful to know what the internet speed is in different parts of your home. First, it will give you baseline information to tell a Verizon CS person so when you say it is slow you can give

them the exact figures. Tested right at the router it will tell you if you are getting the actual speed package you have. And it will tell you how much the signal has degraded in varied areas of your home which will be helpful in making decisions on adding devices that can boost the signal in the other areas.

The easiest and most accurate way of testing your wireless signal is with a free app called **SPEED TEST** by Ookla. Simply go to the App Store on your phone or tablet and look for that app and download it. Once downloaded, open it and you'll see a circle in the middle of the screen. Just tap on that and it will begin a test that will first show you the download speed and then the upload speed.

Begin by first testing right in front of the router. If you have a 50/50 package you should see speeds equal and above. If you're seeing for example 25 or lower then you need to make a call to Verizon (and you'll be able to tell them exactly what you are seeing). After testing in front of the router go around the home and test to see where your weak areas are.

ACTION #4: Increase Speeds To Weak Areas With An Extender

Internet extenders can boost a weak signal in areas where they are placed. Many homeowners may have already gotten an extender or had Access Points installed in their homes looking to boost their signal. There are hundreds of extenders on Amazon and Verizon has their own model all with varying degrees of effectiveness.

Our recommendation is to look at Verizon's newest extender which is made to work with the newest Router mentioned above. Right now the combination of the new router and extender for weak areas does the most effective job of providing a stable and fast signal throughout the home (So again call Verizon and upgrade to the new router). Generally speaking, you'll only need one extender which you'll place in the area with the weakest signal. Depending on the size and layout of your home you might need an additional unit. Unlike the new router for which there should be no cost, you'll have to purchase (or rent) the extender.

ACTION #5: Increase Speeds By Increasing Your Speed Package

Another way to increase your internet speed is to increase your Speed package beyond the standard package 50/50. Verizon has options to increase the speed package. You can increase your speed package to 75/75 for a \$10 monthly charge or 100/100 for \$20. Increasing your speed package to 75/75 will provide you with a noticeable difference.

BEWARE. When calling Verizon to upgrade your speed package DO NOT let them try to lead you to upgrade to their fastest speed package referred to as "Gigabyte" speeds. Verizon has been pushing this and while it's blazing fast it is also \$50 more a month -- and for the normal home it is overkill (Unless you work from home and need a very fast connection). We have heard that Verizon has tried to tell some homeowners that they do not offer the 75 or 100 packages to Bulk Service communities, but that is not true. If you encounter a CS person who tries to tell you that, insist on the 75 or 100 package and if need be ask for a supervisor.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE NO CONNECTION

IF No Cable TV and Internet

If both your Cable and Internet are out this usually signals an area wide Verizon issue. We have heard of people saying they were on the line for an hour or more. Make sure you're calling the dedicated Bulk Service number (888-553-1555). That line is usually a shorter wait. If you happen to call the general Verizon number, once you get through, they'll only transfer you, meaning another wait.

There ARE however a couple of things you can try before calling Verizon. First try to restart the router by unplugging the power cord and coax connection into the router, wait a couple of minutes and see if that works. If it doesn't work, then go out to your garage where you'll see a small rectangular black box on the wall (probably near the electric panel). This is called the ONT box. Unplug the power cord and wait about minute or two and then plug back in. Next go to the router and go through the restart process again. Hopefully this will work without a call to Verizon.

IF Have Cable TV But No Internet

This is generally an IP address issue where the router has lost the IP address. This is usually signaled by your device showing you are connected to Wi-Fi (you see the wave like bars) but when you try to go online you get no connection. What has happened is that you have lost the internet signal into the home ... you still have a Wi-Fi connection but it is not carrying an internet signal. You'll also see a solid red light when you go to the Router.

If this has happened, try and do the Restart process described above and you'll see a blinking White light as the router tries to generate an IP address. This blinking process could take as long as 5 or 10 minutes. If the light goes to solid white you should be good to go. BUT if it goes back to solid Red it means the router could not generate the IP address on its own....and this requires a call to Verizon. Generally, this issue is taken care of from the back office as they can generate the IP address from there. An on-site repair call is only needed if they have no success in taking care of this.

IF NO INTERNET AND/OR NO CABLE...WHAT CAN I DO TO NOT GO CRAZY?

You can use your phone to broadcast data just like a router, it's called a HOT SPOT. If your phone has this feature and your cell plan allows it (most do) you can use this as a temporary internet connection. To do this Go into your phone settings and look for HOT SPOT. When you see it just tap on the button to turn it on. You will see that it lists a password, type that in to access hot spot.

Once the HOT SPOT is turned on, go to the device you want to use and connect to the HOT SPOT. For example, let's say you are using a laptop or desktop. Go to your Wi-fi settings where the local networks are listed, and you should see your HOT SPOT listed just like any other network. Just click next to it to connect. The process is much the same on a tablet. Once connected to your HOT SPOT you will have an internet connection to use.

A few cautions ... (1) the connection is only as good as your cell signal, so if you have a very weak cell signal (NO LTE or just 1 or 2 bars) this may not work well and (2) even with a good signal the connection will not be fast so don't expect to be able to connect to every site or download items quickly. AND **CHECK YOUR CELL PLAN**. If you have an unlimited data plan, use the HOT SPOT as much as you like ... but if you only have limited data you need to be careful or you'll incur extra charges. Every phone will tell you in settings how much data you have and what's been used.

Finally, **if you also have no cable** and absolutely need to see a program or a previously recorded show, you're in luck. Use the **MY VERIZON** app. First download the app to your phone or tablet. Then log in with your Verizon account username and password. Once you're logged in there are many live programs you can watch from the device. You can also view your recorded shows ... or go to ON Demand and view shows. This also works with streaming channel apps on your device (e.g., Netflix, HBO, ShowTime). We hope this information is helpful -- and GOOD LUCK!

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