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Frugal phone service comes with a catch

Advice to consumers: Watch out for hidden fees or other needed services, additional equipment

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T-Mobile rolled out a commercial this month that shows a woman with a chainsaw cutting down telephone poles.

The company is trying to drum up interest in its new home phone plan, which debuted last week and costs \$10 a month for unlimited local and nationwide calls. The plan is for people who are hesitant to sever all ties to a land line, but want to cut down on their phone bills.

For young people, giving up their land lines is "the new rage," said Jim Chilsen, a spokesman for the Citizens Utility Board, a nonprofit group that represents the interests of utility customers in Illinois.

"But it won't be right for other people," he cautioned.

The new T-Mobile plan is a new twist for people who are in the latter category, he said.

"This definitely is an interesting offer," he said. "It's one of the lowest-priced, Internet-based telephone services that we've ever seen. It's definitely a good deal for certain customers. But the customer will be the ultimate judge with how well this works."

Chilsen cautioned consumers to read all the fine print before signing up for any phone company's plan. For instance, the T-Mobile plan does include taxes and "fees." Also, Chilsen said it's possible the rate is an introductory offer, but it's hard to tell from the company's Web site.

The T-Mobile plan requires you to have a broadband Internet connection for it to work. So if you don't already have broadband, that could be an added cost of \$20 to \$40 a month, Chilsen said.

The new T-Mobile service also requires a wireless router. The price for the router is \$150 unless you commit to a two-year contract with the company. Then it costs only \$50.

The company is selling V-Tech phones for \$60 they say work best with the router, though any home phone can be used. Also, to qualify for the home plan, customers have to have a T-Mobile cell phone package of at least \$39.99.

"If you do all that, the costs will add up," Chilsen said.

For someone who already has broadband Internet and T-Mobile service, the deal looks

enticing. But customers who make a lot of international calls should make sure they check out the price of those calls before signing a contract, too, he added.

Even with all the caveats, Chilsen said the T-Mobile plan is worth checking out.

"This is a very intriguing deal and a very encouraging development in the telephone industry," he said. "We're getting closer and closer to Internet phone service that is more accessible to everyone. ... This will only help consumers."

[T-Mobile announces new home phone plan for \\$10 monthly](#)

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[T-Mobile unveils T-Mobile @Home service](#)

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