

# Surewest (Fiber Optics) Broadband, Sure!

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## 1 Best deal in town!

Go check out Surewest's own website at <http://www.surewest.net> for more details. You may need to call them up to get exact pricing information.

In summary, Surewest offers residential fiber optics connection for the price of phone-line based DSL. For casual surfers, the difference is probably not very noticeable, "high speed" is anything faster than 1Mbps. However, if you are an amateur website developer, someone who gets most information from the web or someone who needs a highspeed link to telecommute, fiber optics can make a huge difference.

Pacbell (now called SBC) offers DSL at 1.5Mbps down and 128kbps up. This often translates to a maximum download speed of 150kBps (note the upper case 'B' for byte instead of the lower case 'b' for bit). That's decent. However, it pales when compared to Surewest's fiber optics connection. Currently the home-side fiber optics transceiver is limited at 10Mbps downlink *and* uplink. Yep, that's the same speed as the 10 base T *local* area network standard! Plus, each house gets its very own fiber connection, so it is not shared among the neighbors like cable modem.

The physical bandwidth of a strand of fiber optics easily exceeds 1Gbps, so there is *much* room for expansion before the physical link itself becomes the limit. Compared to DSL, which uses the same twisted copper wire originally intended for voice transmission, the fiber optics approach can remain effective for years to come. Compared to cable modem, as mentioned earlier, Surewest gets each house a fiber. This means each house gets the same potential physical bandwidth regardless of what your neighbors are doing. Of course, much of the bandwidth is still limited by routers, switches and other infrastructural resources shared by a neighborhood, but at least the bottleneck is not as local as cable modem.

Besides, cable operators often use software to limit your speed to 1.5Mbps *just* to stay even with DSL.

But there is more! Surewest does not advertise this, but your IP remains the same with their broadband service. This means you get pretty much static IP *for the same price as lower speed and dynamic IP DSL!* This is not important for surfers, but it is very handy for people who need a connection to the home machine.

## 2 But, you may not get it

The down side of Surewest is that not every neighborhood gets it. Surewest is still aggressively installing their cables throughout the Sacramento area. I am lucky enough to live in one of the first neighborhoods that got the cables routed. Check with Surewest to know for sure if your neighborhood has fiber optics broadband.

## 3 Icing on the cake

With fiber optics broadband, you can also order phone services and cable TV via the same fiber optics connection. This is cool. The best part is that the phone service is no more expensive than Pacbell's

(uh, SBC's). In fact, after Surewest throws in included caller ID, caller waiting, caller ID blocking and etc., it is *less* expensive to go with Surewest's phone-over-fiber service. Surewest also include unlimited same-area-code calling, unlike SBC.

I don't have much time for TV-program-with-commercial, so I do not subscribe the cable TV service. As such, I cannot comment on it.

## 4 Conclusion

Some people prefer to stick with known and huge companies, but I rather like the services and products of smaller and more innovative companies. Surewest definitely falls in the category of smaller and more innovative companies. Combined with a flawless track record so far and cost effectiveness, there is no reason for me to switch back to SBC.