

3G Mobile Coverage Still Spotty in Suburbs

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The quality of third-generation, or 3G, mobile Internet services in Moscow varies greatly among the big three carriers, according to recent analysis by Telecomdaily, with MegaFon showing the best results for areas outside the city limits.

Measurements were carried out in April and May 2011 in the city and in towns of 10,000 people or more in the Moscow region — which represents about 90 percent of the population, Telecomdaily chief executive Denis Kuskov said.

The company used a special device to load files of a standard size from the Internet at regular intervals in order to test the average and maximum speed of access to mobile operators, as well as the area of their coverage.

MegaFon scored the highest average and maximum speed at three and seven megabits per second, or Mbps, respectively. In second place was Mobile TeleSystems with an average speed

of 2.1 Mbps and maximum of 5.2 Mbps, while VimpelCom took third at 1.7 Mbps and 4.6 Mbps.

Within the city, the big three's 3G networks and Sky Link — which uses the CDMA-450 standard — and Scartel (under the brand name Yota, provider of mobile WiMax) cover 80 percent of the city. In the suburbs, SkyLink was in first place for overall coverage, reaching 75 percent of the population, while MegaFon covers 67 percent. According to Telecomdaily's investigation, VimpelCom's 3G network only reaches 7 percent of the Moscow region's population.

Sergei Lyadovoi, VimpelCom technical director for Moscow, said Telecomdaily's findings are accurate in general. The company has been installing 3G base stations at airports, shopping malls and other crowded places that subscribers frequent. By late summer, VimpelCom plans to cover 100 percent of the city, and, by the end of the year, 100 percent of the area within a 25 kilometer radius of Moscow, he said.

Within the same period, MegaFon plans to fully deploy its 3G network in all regional centers of the Moscow region, spending in 2011 the same amount of 7.5 billion rubles (\$267 million) it spent last year to develop its regional network, said MegaFon Moscow commercial director Natalya Spitsina.

MTS is planning to double its 3G coverage of the region by the end of this year and cover 90 percent of the population, said MTS Moscow technical director Sergei Druzhchenko.

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