



EIRCON

Former state-owned phone giant is MORE expensive night and day

By AINE HEGARTY

IT'S GOOD to talk – but not if you're an Eircom customer.

A price survey has revealed homeowners can knock 90 per cent off their phone bill if they switch from the Irish giants.

Consumer campaigners found the former state-owned firm had the most expensive landline calls.

Even customers who opt for Eircom's best deals can still save up to 30 per cent if they switch to another company.

The results of the Consumer Association's survey will make grim reading for Eircom bosses.

In every single case, Eircom was more expensive for local, national or international landline calls at any time of the day.

And Swiftcall director Luke Rafferty said his company had managed to woo 60,000 people from Eircom because of their cheaper rates.

He added: "We have consistently reduced our prices while Eircom do it every two or three years, maybe when someone new comes onto the market."

Mr Rafferty said greater competition was hampered by Eircom's ownership of the network of phone cables linking homes to exchanges across the country.

Competitors who have to use this network claim Eircom has too much control in the market.

The Swiftcall boss added: "People forget Eircom is now a private company owned by Australians."

"It's no longer a Government monopoly but is being run as a private monopoly."

A weekend call to the US costs 15.23c a minute with Eircom compared to just 4c with Swiftcall and 7.99c with BT

Ireland, which is the second biggest phone firm in the state.

A weekday evening call to Britain costs 14.44c a minute with Eircom, 5c with Perlico and 1.1c with TalkTalk.

National daytime calls cost 8.17c a minute with Eircom, 7.35c with UTV, 3.79c with BT Ireland – and are free with Cinergi.

Daytime calls to Europe can cost 24.20c with Eircom against 7c with Worldlink, 11.99c with BT Ireland and 8c on Perlico.

The Consumer Association of Ireland also compared the cost of calling mobile phones from landlines and found Eircom the most expensive in four tariffs out of 12. Of the other eight, Eircom's charges were among the highest.

Eircom charges 14.1c a minute to call 02 mobiles at the weekend compared to 11c with BT Ireland and 10.4 cent with TalkTalk.

Eircom's rates for calling Meteor, a firm they bought in 2005, range from 26.83c in daytime to 14.52c at weekends – a shade cheaper than UTV but still more expensive than BT Ireland.

Homeowners getting "bundle" packages could pay €40.69 monthly with Eircom for an hour of national calls, 60 minutes of calls to Britain and 30 minutes to the US.

Yet they could get the same amount of calls with TalkTalk's Talk1 package for just €28.38 – 30 per cent less than Eircom.

The Government website call-costs.ie said BT Ireland's best deal would charge €33.74 for the same calls, Swiftcall's bill would be €29.52 and Perlico's would be €30.88.

Eircom yesterday defended its prices claiming the firm offers customers value for money.

A spokeswoman said: "No other provider offers a wider

range of products or discounts.

"More than 500,000 of our customers are on a discount package.

"Eircom has tailored phone packages with each one offering customers the ability to make significant savings."

news@trishmirror.ie

Eircom is owned by Australians and it is run like a monopoly

- SWIFTCALL'S LUKE RAFFERTY

HOW THEY COMPARE..

National daytime calls (per minute):

Eircom..... 8.17c
BT Ireland3.79c
CinergiFree

Weekend call to US:

Eircom 15.23c
BT Ireland7.99c
Swiftcall.....4c

Weekday evening call to Britain:

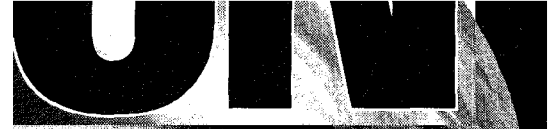
Eircom 14.44c
Perlico5c
TalkTalk1.1c

Daytime to Europe:

Eircom 24.20c
Perlico8c
Worldlink7c

To call 02 mobiles at weekend:

Eircom..... 14.1c
BT Ireland.....11c
TalkTalk10.4c



RAGE:
Cost of
Eircom
calls
sparks
fury