

The telecommunications sector in the UAE is modern and sophisticated and provides citizens and companies with a highly efficient and cost-effective communications network. In 2006, the General Policy for the Telecommunication Sector (GTP) was released by the Supreme Committee for the Supervision of the Telecom Sector (SCSTS). The goal of the GTP, among other things, is to encourage competition between operating companies, foster innovation through research and development, develop a state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure, and contribute to economic diversification by promoting the UAE as an ICT hub.

The UAE is one of the most wired nations in the region and the penetration figures of key services are comparable to the most developed markets worldwide. Mobile penetration, with over 6 million customers, has exceeded the 100 per cent mark (140%); 600,000 internet subscribers have access to the internet and the number of fixed lines subscribers exceeded 1.5 million. Individuals need a residence visa to get a fixed line installed in their home but a SIM card for the mobile phone may be purchased without residency.

There are two operators in the UAE market, the Emirates Telecommunications Corporation Etisalat, and Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company (EITC) which operates under the trade name of 'du'.

Emirates Telecommunications Corporation - Etisalat

Emirates Telecommunications Corporation - Etisalat - was the sole telecom operator in the UAE from 1976 to 2006, when the market was liberalised. In 2006 Etisalat ranked the sixth largest corporation in the Middle East.

Etisalat services include Internet access, ATM LAN and WAN networks, e-commerce services, prepaid phone cards, mobile phone services, cable television and local telecommunications. Its mobile network is based on GSM standards. Etisalat's network has been the backbone of the UAE telecommunications network.

Etisalat offers fixed line services over its Next Generation Network, and provides mobile users with a range of services and applications such as GPRS, 3G, Blackberry and Mobile Cam. Etisalat provides broadband internet access to the entire UAE and is currently working on rolling out triple play services, which will incorporate high-speed Internet, TV and fixed line offerings all via one cable. In addition to voice and data networks Etisalat also has many other offerings including the E-Vision cable TV network.

Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company - du

The monopoly of Etisalat ended in December 2006 with the launch of a second telecom operator called "du". The Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company (EITC), is a public joint-stock company, its main shareholders are the Federal Government (40%), Mubadala Development (20%) and Emirates Telecommunications and Technology Ltd. (20%), a subsidiary of Dubai Technology & Commerce and Free Zone Authority (TECOM). Twenty per cent of the company was offered for public subscription early in 2006.

Under the agreement du is permitted to offer fixed-line, mobile and internet services and rolled out GSM services in metropolitan and commercial zones at the end of 2006, while fixed line and broadband service were introduced during 2007. The company has set itself the target of acquiring 30 per cent of the UAE market within three years.

Examples of Charges - Etisalat

Fixed line for businesses package	
Charges	AED
Installation charge, first line	180
Installation charge, additional line	100
Phone rental charge	50 per month
Additional socket on the same phone line	50
Local call – peak rate per minute	0.05 - 0.24
Local call – off-peak rate per minute	0.025 - 0.12

Telecommunications and Data Networks

International call	Normal rate	Off-peak rate
Australia	2.69	1.91
China	3.21	2.47
Egypt	2.40	1.89
France	2.12	1.37
Germany	2.12	1.37
India	2.40	1.89
Iran	2.40	1.89
Lebanon	2.40	1.89
Oman	2.12	1.00
Pakistan	2.40	2.89
Russia	2.69	1.91
Saudi Arabia	2.12	1.37
South Africa	2.69	1.91
United Kingdom	2.69	1.91
USA	2.12	1.37

Off-Peak Rate Timings

For all dialled calls within UAE, the Off-Peak rate timings are between 2pm to 4pm and 9pm to 7am from Saturday to Thursday. However, on Friday, the Off-Peak rate timings are all day until 7am Saturday. For all national public holidays declared by Federal Government, the Off-Peak rates timing applies throughout the day. Within the fixed line for businesses package, international calls are charged at Off-Peak rates around the world, around the clock and every day.

Broadband internet	
Charges	AED
Installation charge	200
Router purchase charge	300
Upgrade/downgrade charge	100
512 Kbps single user package	295
512 Kbps single user package	595
1 Mbps multi user package	895
2 Mbps multi user package	1,295
3 Mbps multi user package	1,895
4 Mbps multi user package	2,595