

In vengeful move CBS blocks web episodes for TWC Internet customers

Violating the spirit — not the law — of net neutrality

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[CBS stations have disappeared](#) for many Time Warner Cable subscribers today, after the companies' negotiations over retransmission fees failed to reach an amicable conclusion. But cable TV users aren't the only ones without access to episodes of their favorite shows: CBS is also blocking Time Warner Cable *internet* subscribers from watching episodes on its website CBS.com. We can confirm that when trying to access a full episode of any CBS show, like *Elementary* or *Two and a Half Men*, those with Time Warner Cable internet [will see an attack ad](#) instead of their normal programming.

While that might sound like a valid tactic to use in a no-holds-barred game of chicken like the one these companies are playing right now, it also flies

in the face [of net neutrality principles](#). Not net neutrality laws or rules, mind you, as [the FCC Open Internet rules](#) restrict broadband providers, not content companies like CBS.

CBS doesn't deny blocking the episodes at all, [providing TechCrunch](#) with the following statement:

If Time Warner Cable is a customer's internet service provider, then their access to CBS full episode content via online and mobile platforms has been suspended as a result of Time Warner Cable's decision to drop CBS and Showtime from their market. As soon as CBS is restored on Time Warner Cable systems in affected markets, that content will be accessible again.

Of course, TWC is none too happy about the tactic, but [interestingly](#) didn't choose to play the net neutrality card. It provided *The Verge* with a statement of its own:

CBS has shown utter lack of regard for consumers by blocking Time Warner Cable's customers, including our high-speed data only customers, from accessing their shows on their free website. CBS enjoys the privilege of using public owned airwaves to deliver their programming – they should not be allowed to abuse that privilege.

It's not the first time a content company has gone this far. [In 2010, News Corp restricted Hulu access to customers of Cablevision](#) over a similar dispute, up to and including its internet-only subscribers.

Update: CBS tells *The Verge* that it does not consider this tactic to violate net neutrality principles. "This issue has nothing to do with the issue of net neutrality," said a spokesman, respectfully declining to discuss the philosophy behind the decision.