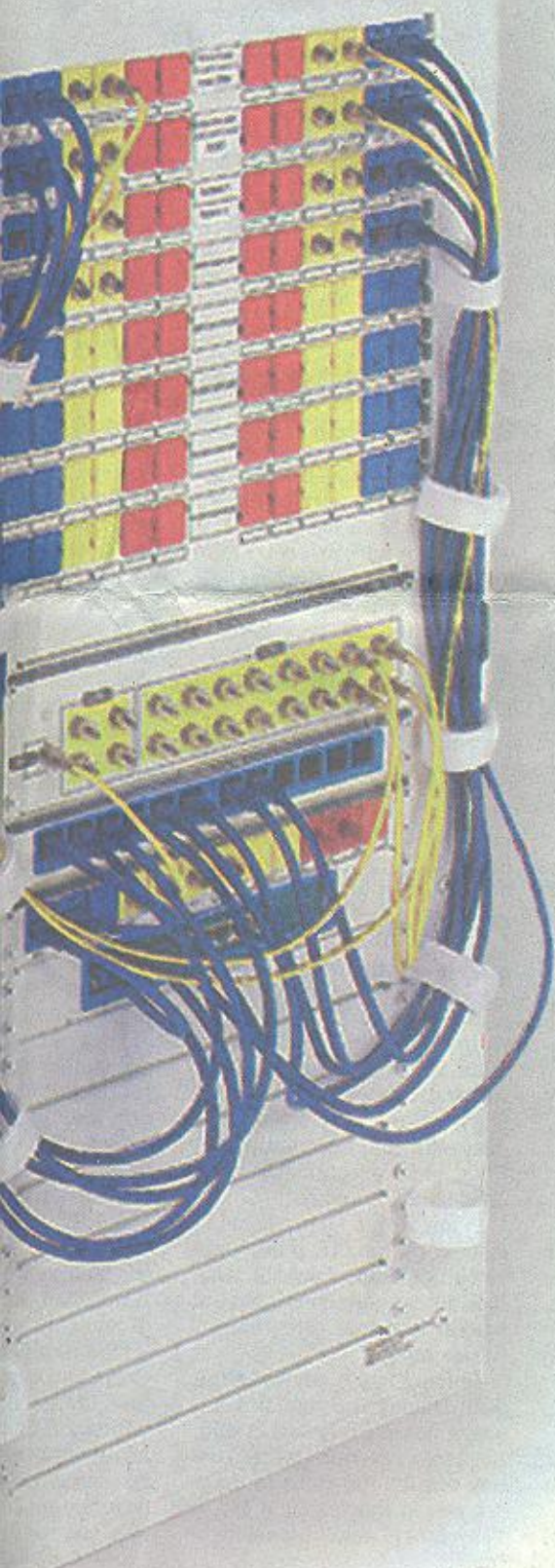


Wiring a home during construction costs about 1 to 2 percent of the house's final price.



# Wiring for a smart house

Builders and homebuyers haven't bought into it yet.

By ADOLFO PESQUERA  
EXPRESS-NEWS BUSINESS WRITER

Texas homes may be wired but not nearly as efficiently as they should be to take full advantage of the computer age.

Brian Cabral, president of Residential Technology Services, is trying to change that. But he's finding that getting the message through to builders and homebuyers is tough.

"Builders have been fairly slow to grab onto this," Cabral said. "They're building

more houses than ever. Their timelines are really tight, and anything that gets in the way of their construction schedule, they feel, is just too much.

"While (consumers) understand the technology is out there, they don't understand that they have to ask for it."

Cabral sells structured wiring installation. It involves a bundled system of two coaxial cables for satellite, cable TV, VCRs, DVDs and security cameras and two CAT 5e cables for telephones, faxes, computer networks and DSL.

The bundle has the ability to serve other electronic devices, including smart refrigerators that will track inventory and automatically put in shopping orders to your favorite

See BUILT-IN/6D



GLORIA FENRIZ/STAFF

Brian Cabral shows a junction box that controls electronics throughout the house. Cabral's company specializes in such structured wiring installations.

# Built-in wiring upgrades homes for 21st century

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grocery store.

Similar home-wiring systems have gained acceptance on the West Coast, and companies that provide the service proliferate there, said Lisa Calhoun, Cabral's business development director.

"This is the only one in Texas," she said.

Builders who put extra wiring in a house generally drop in a CAT 5e cable for a computer. The cable company will put in as many lines as requested, but all of the lines are brought in from an outside box. Each time a video cable is split, it weakens the signal and clarity is lost.

Structural wiring, however, goes to a central junction box. From there the signals are amplified and sent on throughout the house. The homeowner has control from the box to wherever the signal and power are going. This makes it easier to troubleshoot any problems.

It also makes it easier to control the children.

"Say Sally is grounded," Cabral said. "You just pull a plug at the box and she has no Internet, or whatever it is you want to deprive her of."

J.B. Shilts, a Summerglenn resident, is ahead of the curve when it comes to making use of structural wiring.

"I'd read about networking," said Shilts, who dabbles in general contracting. "We'd gone to

all the home and garden shows and looked at CAT 5. When you build your own house, that's the only way to go."

Shilts hired an electrician who claimed to know how to install structural wiring, but she later realized that he didn't. That's when she hired Cabral's company.

From a junction in a small closet, she now controls a home entertainment system to the family cinema room, a whole-house stereo system and a computer, phone and fax in the home office.

Doing the wiring during construction costs about 1 to 2 percent of the house's final price. It costs considerably more to install structural wiring later.

"The retrofit market has been the key to funding our efforts to get into the new-home market," Cabral said. "Boston (where he also operates an office) is really more of a retrofit market."

Cabral also has an office in Pleasanton, Calif., and he plans to open one in Phoenix.

The product is marketed on the Internet through WireMyHome.net. Cabral started the company two years ago in Houston and moved to San Antonio with the idea that it would make a more practical test market.

"Houston, Dallas and Austin (where he has offices) just have too much building going on to make an effective penetration," he said.