



Case No. GNR-T-16-03, Order No. 33495

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PUC maintains ITSAP assessment at 1-cent per month

BOISE (April 6, 2016) – The number of Idahoans receiving low-income telephone assistance declined sharply during 2015, even while the number of wireline and wireless users increases.

The Idaho Telecommunications Service Assistance Program (ITSAP) provides a \$2.50 per month discount for qualifying telephone and cell phone users. A federal program, Lifeline, provides another \$9.25 per month. Funds for the Idaho program are raised through a surcharge on all end-user business, residential and wireless lines.

The Idaho Public Utilities Commission recently decided to leave that assessment at 1-cent per line per month to fund the Idaho portion of the program. The surcharge has declined from a high of 12 cents per line per month to 7 cents in 2013 and 3 cents in 2014.

Lifeline was established in 1985 to ensure that low-income citizens, including many senior citizens, have access to local dial-tone service.

Those who seek telephone assistance must be the head of a household and meet narrowly targeted eligibility criteria established by the state Department of Health and Welfare. The Public Utilities Commission establishes the amount of surcharge necessary to fund the program.

The average number of ITSAP recipients per month in 2015 was 6,693, down from 10,674 in 2014, 17,626 during 2013, 23,434 in 2012 and 25,310 in 2011.

The number of telephone lines to support the fund, both wireline and wireless, increased during 2015 after declining in 2014. Average wireline access lines per month increased from 427,065 in 2014 to 435,822 in 2015. The average number of wireless access lines per month in Idaho increased to 1,414,763 during 2015, compared to 1,329,112 in 2014.

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