

TELECOMMUNICATIONS



ITSAP assessment unchanged

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

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.

Commission adopts proposal to disburse Qwest funds for suicide prevention hotline, E-911 dispatch training

Case No. GNT-T-16-04, Order No. 33532

June 13, 2016 – The commission adopted a proposal of commission staff to disburse about \$90,000 remaining in a commission-maintained Qwest Corporation compliance account to Idaho’s Suicide Prevention Hotline and to Idaho’s Police Officer Standards and Training Academy (POST).

Qwest, the predecessor company to what is now CenturyLink, paid into the fund when it failed to meet performance standards designed to ensure that other telecommunications providers were allowed access to Qwest facilities to provide competitive telecommunications services. Payments to the fund were discontinued in 2010.

Commission staff proposed that \$44,900 be allocated to the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare’s Suicide Prevention Action Network and \$44,910 be allocated toward training and certification of E-911 emergency dispatchers at POST.

The commission adopted staff’s recommendations, stating that the proposed uses of the remaining funds were in the public interest.

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for Idahoans ages 15-34. Idaho’s overall suicide rate is 52 percent higher than the national average and double the national average for youths ages 10-19. To address this priority at-risk age group, the Suicide Prevention Hotline is launching “Texts for Life,” to reach people more comfortable texting or using an on-line chat service. While the new service will be open to all ages, the focus is on support for youths and others who favor these technologies, including veterans. The new money will improve the hotline’s capacity to handle several thousand text messages as well as chats and calls from those in crisis.

The allocation to POST will pay for about four years (at about \$10,000 a year) to fully develop the certification program required for emergency dispatchers at “911” centers while other funding solutions are identified.

Telecommunications Utilities Under IPUC Jurisdiction

Albion Telephone Corp (ATC), P.O. Box 98, Albion, Idaho 83311-0098, **208-673-5335**

Cambridge Telephone Co. P.O. Box 88, Cambridge, Idaho 83610-0086, **208-257-3314**

***CenturyLink, (formerly Qwest Communications)** North and South Idaho, Box 7888 (83723) or 999 Main Street, Boise, Idaho 83702 **800-339-3929**

***CenturyTel of Idaho, Inc.**, dba CenturyLink, 250 Bell Plaza, Room 1601, Salt Lake City, UT, 84010, **801-238-0240**.

***CenturyTel of the Gem State**, dba CenturyLink, 250 Bell Plaza, Room 1601, Salt Lake City, UT, 84010, **801-238-0240**.

***Citizens Telecommunications Company of Idaho**, dba as Frontier Communications of Idaho, 20575 NW Von Neuman Dr. Ste. 150, Beaverton, OR, 97006, **503-629-2459**

Columbine, dba Silver Star Communications, PO Box 226, Freedom, Wyo., 83120, **877-883-2411**

***Frontier Communications Northwest, Inc.** (formerly Verizon Northwest, Inc.), 20575 NW Von Neuman Dr. Ste. 150, Beaverton, OR, 97006, **503-629-2459**

Direct Communications Rockland, Inc., Box 269, 150 S. Main St. Rockland, ID 83271
208-548-2345

Inland Telephone Co., 103 South Second Street, Box 171, Roslyn, WA 98941
509-649-2211

Fremont Telecom, Inc., dba Fremont Communications, 1221 N. Russell St., Missoula, MT, 59808,
406-541-5454

Inland Telephone Co., 103 S. Second St., Box 171, Roslyn, WA 98941, **509-649-2211**

Midvale Telephone Company, Box 7, Midvale, Idaho 83645, **208-355-2211**

Oregon-Idaho Utilities, Inc., 3645 Grand Ave., Ste. 205A, Oakland, CA 94610 **510/338-4621**
Local: 1023 N. Horton St., Nampa, Idaho 83653 **208-461-7802**

Pine Telephone System, Inc., Box 706, Halfway, OR 97834 **541-742-2201**

Potlatch Telephone Company, dba/ TDS Telecom, Box 138, 702 E. Main St. Kendrick, Idaho 83537, **208-835-2211**

Rural Telephone Company, 829 W. Madison Avenue, Glens Ferry, Idaho 83623-2372
208/366-2614

**These companies, which represent more than 90 percent of Idaho customers, are no longer rate regulated. However, they are still regulated for customer service.*