

IDAHO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Case No. GNR-T-01-3, Order No. 29613

October 14, 2004

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Website: www.puc.state.id.us

Toll-free calling between Shoup and Salmon requested

Boise – Telephone customers in the Shoup area are asking the Idaho Public Utilities Commission to approve toll-free calling into the North Fork and Salmon exchanges. Currently, calls between the Salmon-North Fork and Shoup exchanges are long-distance toll calls.

If the commission were to grant Shoup's request, the basic monthly fee for local calling for Shoup customers of Rural Telephone would increase from \$21.63 to \$24.10 for residential lines and from \$40.68 to \$42 for business lines.

CenturyTel customers in Salmon and North Fork, who would also be able to place toll-free calls to Shoup, would get a 9-cent per month increase. Residential customers would see an increase from \$21.75 per month to \$21.84 and business customers from \$39.77 to \$39.86.

Rural Telephone has about 42 residential and 15 business customers in the Shoup area. The customers who petitioned the commission for toll-free calling say it is prohibitively expensive for Shoup residents to dial outside their exchange to contact local physicians, the area medical facility, schools, social services, Internet providers, law enforcement and emergency services, businesses and Lemhi County government offices.

The commission uses a set of criteria to evaluate whether toll-free calling should be implemented and if it merits an increase in rates for local service. Those criteria include call volume into the exchanges where toll-free calling is sought, the geographic proximity between the exchanges, and proximity to school districts and medical services. The commission also evaluates the willingness of customers to pay increased rates to recover the costs for converting to toll-free routes. When costs are disproportionate to customer needs and benefits, the commission has denied requests for toll-free calling. In this case, commission staff has recommended approval of the petition. The commission is free to accept, reject or modify commission staff recommendations.

The commission is requesting comments from the public on this matter by no later than Nov. 3, particularly on the question of whether customers in all the exchanges are willing to pay more in local calling rates for the toll-free service. The commission will proceed under a modified procedure that allows the case to be handled through written public comments rather than by public hearing. However, comments may request a public hearing.

Comments can be submitted via e-mail by accessing the commission's homepage at www.puc.state.id.us and clicking on "Comments & Questions." Fill in the case number (GNR-T-

01-3) and enter your comments. Comments can also be mailed to P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720-0074 or faxed to (208) 334-3762.

A full text of the commission's order, along with other documents related to this case, are available on the commission's Web site. Click on "File Room" and then on "Telephone Cases" and scroll down to the above case number.