



Idaho Public Utilities Commission

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Kristine Raper, Commissioner
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Case No. GNR-T-21-02

Order No. 34988

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NEWS RELEASE: Commission accepts annual report, budget for Idaho Telecommunications Relay Service

BOISE (April 12, 2021) – The Idaho Public Utilities Commission has accepted the 2020 annual report and the 2021 budget for the Idaho Telecommunications Relay Service.

The relay service, established by the Idaho Legislature in 1992, allows hearing- or speech-impaired residents to use phone communications “in a manner that is functionally equivalent to individuals without hearing or speech impairments.” A relay center is used, which converts or relays verbal conversations to text-type and vice versa. The relay center also provides speech-to-speech, Spanish-to-Spanish, video, and Internet relay services.

The commission approved the 2020 annual report and 2021 budget on April 7. The 2021 operating budget is projected at \$173,760 and includes \$8,350 for a required audit of the relay service fund. The 2021 budget also includes an increase in the telephone line charge from \$0.03 per line to \$0.05 line, and an MTS/WATS minute rate increase from \$0.0008 per minute to \$0.001 per minute. The increase is intended to ensure the long-term viability of the relay service fund, and takes effect May 1, 2021.

The increase in the line charge and MTS/WATS minute rate does not apply to cell phone or Internet service. The surcharge is paid by telephone companies. Idaho Code does not allow companies to pass the surcharge on to their customers.

Hamilton Telecommunications operates the relay center, and submitted the report and budget to the Idaho Public Utilities Commission. The relay service is funded by assessments on local residential and business telephone service access lines and on billed intrastate long-distance minutes. In-state relay traffic and captioned telephone services are reimbursed by the fund, while the firm of Rolka Loube Saltzer Associates, LLC reimburses Hamilton for interstate calls.

Hamilton Telecommunications said the relay center handled 2,106 calls in calendar year 2020, a 26 percent increase from calendar year 2019. The number of captioned telephone units held steady. The 2020 average answer time by Hamilton was 0.85 seconds, compared to 0.41 seconds in 2019. The increased average answer time was due to greater usage during the Covid-19 pandemic.

For more information on the commission's decision, please visit:
<https://puc.idaho.gov/Fileroom/PublicFiles/telecom/34988.pdf>