



## Idaho Public Utilities Commission

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Paul Kjellander, Commissioner  
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*Case No. GNR-T-15-03, Order No. 33284*

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# Telephone surcharge decreasing June 1

**BOISE (April 24, 2015)** -- A surcharge that helps to ensure low-income Idahoans have access to a phone line is being decreased to 1-cent per month for every wireline and wireless phone because of declining participation in the Idaho Telecommunications Service Assistance Program (ITSAP).

The surcharge has declined from a high of 12 cents per line per month to 7 cents in 2013, 3 cents last year and 1 cent this year. Collections from the surcharge go to telephone companies who then disburse the funds to qualifying customers. ITSAP provides a \$2.50 per month discount for qualifying telephone and cell phone users. That is on top of a \$9.25 per month contribution from the federal Lifeline program. Legislation adopted in 2012 reduced the size of the Idaho contribution from \$3.50 per month to \$2.50.

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

Those who seek telephone assistance must be determined eligible by the state Department of Health and Welfare. The Idaho Public Utilities Commission establishes the amount of surcharge necessary to fund the program.

The commission decided to reduce the monthly contribution once again due primarily to fewer Idahoans either qualifying or seeking eligibility for the program. The average number of ITSAP recipients per month in 2014 was 10,674, a 25 percent decrease from 17,626 during 2013. In 2012, the average number of recipients per month was 23,434, down from 2011's number of 25,310.

The number of telephone lines to support the fund, both wireline and wireless, is also declining. Wirelines in Idaho continue their steady decline, from 512,672 in 2011, to 491,572 in 2012, to 454,941 in 2013 and 427,065 in 2014.

For the first time, the number of wireless lines in Idaho also decreased, from 1,395,896 in 2013 to 1,329,112 in 2014. Average wireless access lines per month were 1,276,830 in 2012 and 1,132,234 in 2011.

The commission said the new 1-cent per line, per month charge, effective June 1, will provide adequate funding for ITSAP going forward while also reducing the current fund's surplus.

A copy of the commission's final order is available on the commission web site at [www.puc.idaho.gov](http://www.puc.idaho.gov). Click on "Open Cases" under the "Telecom" heading and scroll down to Case No. GNR-T-15-03.

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