

**SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
LIFELINE/TRIBAL LINK UP ADVERTISING/OUTREACH
ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 1, 2017**

Company: Interstate Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc.
(FKA SSTELECOM, Inc.)

Address: PO Box 920 312 4th St West
Clear Lake, SD 57226

Telephone number: 605-874-218

Company contact: Jim Canaan
Study Area Code: 399013

Lifeline/Tribal Link Up Advertising/Outreach Activities:

- Advertise in media of general distribution.* (See attached advertisement(s).)
- Letter to existing and new customers regarding the availability of Lifeline/ Tribal Link Up within 1st 30 days of service.* (See attached letter.)
- Company's Lifeline/Tribal Link Up information in directory.
- Company's Lifeline/Tribal Link Up information available on Company website. (www.companywebsiteaddress.com) www.itc-web.com
- Company's information posted on USAC website.
- Other (describe): Listed on PUC website
- _____
- _____
- _____

*Required

PUBLIC NOTICE/Milbank

Interstate Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc. (ITC) is designated as the “Eligible Telecommunications Carrier” for its service area for universal service purposes. The goal of universal service is to provide all citizens access to essential telecommunications services.

ITC provides the supported services -- voice telephony service and broadband Internet access service – throughout its designated service area. These supported services include:

- Voice grade access to the public switched network;
- Minutes of use for local service provided at no additional charge;
- Access to emergency services provided by local government or other public safety organizations, such as 911 and enhanced 911, to the extent the local government in ITC’s service area has implemented 911 or enhanced 911 systems.; and
- Broadband Internet access service which includes the capability to send data to and receive data from the Internet, but excludes dial-up service.

Voice telephony service is provided at rates which start at \$22.50 per month for residential customers and \$25.00 per month for business line customers. Broadband Internet access service is provided at rates which start at \$54.95 per month for residential customers and \$54.95 per month for business customers. ITC would be pleased to provide you with specific rates for voice and broadband for your area upon request.

ITC also offers qualified customers Lifeline service. Lifeline is a non-transferable, federal benefit that makes monthly voice or broadband service more affordable. The program is limited to one discount per household. Eligible households may apply the monthly Lifeline discount to either broadband service (home or wireless) or voice service (home or wireless) but not both. Lifeline customers also have the option to apply the discount to a service bundle, such as home phone and home internet. The Lifeline voice service also includes toll blocking to qualifying customers without charge. The current discount provided under the Company’s Lifeline service is \$9.25 per month for each month that the customer qualifies.

A household is eligible for the Lifeline discount if the customer’s annual household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines. You may also qualify for the Lifeline program if a customer, a dependent, or the customer’s household participates in one or more of the following programs:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Supplemental Security Income; Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
- Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit.

Questions regarding any of the above services should be directed to ITC at 1-800-417-8667.

July 2017



Lifeline and Toll Limitation Service support provide discounts to eligible low-income consumers to help them establish and maintain telephone or broadband service. (**Note:** Telecommunications carriers cannot charge a Lifeline customer federal USF fees on the local service portion of their telephone bill.)

What type of discount is available?

Lifeline assistance lowers the cost of basic, monthly local telephone or broadband service. Eligible consumers can receive up to \$9.25 per month in discounts. Eligible residents of Indian reservations or tribal lands can receive up to an additional \$34.25.

Toll Limitation Service (TLS) support allows eligible consumers who wish to avoid incurring large long distance fees to choose toll blocking or toll control at no cost.

How do I know whether I am eligible?

Eligibility for Lifeline, Link Up, and TLS support *varies by state*. Individuals who reside in states that have their own discount programs qualify for federal Lifeline, Link Up, and TLS support if they meet the eligibility criteria established by their state. In states that do not provide state support, an individual is eligible if he or she participates in one of the following programs:

- Federal Public Housing Assistance or Section 8
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Veteran's Pension or Survivor's Pension
- Income-Based Eligibility
- Additional Eligibility Programs for Tribal Lands.

One Lifeline service per household.

GENERAL INFORMATION

USE OF TELEPHONE FOR DEBT COLLECTION PURPOSES

The Federal Communications Commission has received information that interstate telephone service is being used for collection of claimed debts in ways that are or may be in violation of applicable tariffs of the telephone companies and criminal statutes. Practices alleged include calling at odd hours of the day or night; repeated calls; calls to friends, neighbors, relatives, employers, and children; calls making a variety of threats; calls asserting falsely that credit ratings will be hurt; calls falsely stating that legal process is about to be served; calls demanding payments for amounts not owed; calls to places of employment; and calls misrepresenting the terms and conditions of existing or proposed contracts. Although many of these calls are placed on a local basis, there is increasing indication that such improper practices also involve use of interstate toll and Wide Area Telephone Service (WATS).

Tariffs of the telephone companies forbid use of the telephone...for a call or calls, anonymous or otherwise, if in a manner reasonably to be expected to frighten, abuse, torment, or harass another, or for calls that...interfere unreasonably with the use of the service by one or more other customers, or calls for...unlawful purpose. Upon violation of any of these conditions the telephone company can, by written notice, discontinue service forthwith. These tariff regulations are filed with this Commission pursuant to Section 203 of the Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. 203, and are binding on the telephone company and customer alike. Users of the telephone service are also subject to the enforcement proceedings provided for in Sections 401 and 411 of the Communications Act. In addition to the loss of telephone service for violation of the tariffs, Section 223 of the Communications Act makes it a crime to use the telephone in the District of Columbia or in interstate or foreign communications to make "repeated telephone calls, during which conversation ensues, solely to harass any person at the called number" or to knowingly permit "others to use his/her telephone" for such purpose. Penalties for violation of Section 223 are a fine up to \$500.00 or six months' imprisonment, or both, 47 U.S.C. 223.

The Commission is concerned that some users of telephone service may be unaware of their obligations to refrain from using the service for abusive or harassing calls. It is also concerned that other users may be willfully and repeatedly violating the provision of the tariffs and the applicable statutes, and that the telephone companies are not adequately enforcing their tariffs. Accordingly, the Commission is issuing this Public Notice in order that the public may be informed of the requirements of law in this area and so that users may be alerted to their legal obligations in the use of the telephone and the penalties for failure to abide thereby.

LIFELINE AND LINK-UP

Lifeline Service support provides discounts to eligible low income consumers to help them establish and maintain telephone service. Lifeline assistance lowers the cost of basic, monthly local telephone service. A household is eligible for only one lifeline credit, which may be applied to landline or wireless service. Eligible consumers can receive up to \$9.25 per month in discounts. Eligible residents of tribal lands can receive up to an additional \$25.00 in Lifeline support.

Tribal Link-Up reduces the cost of initiating new telephone service. Eligible consumers can receive a 100% discount off of the one-time costs associated with initiating telephone service, up to a maximum of \$100.

Eligibility of Lifeline support varies by state. Individuals who reside in states that have their own discount programs qualify for federal Lifeline and Link-Up if they meet the eligibility criteria established by their state.

To be eligible for these programs the telephone service must be in the applicant's name. An individual is eligible if he or she participates in one of the following programs:

- Medicaid
- Federal Public Housing Assistance or Section 8
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- In addition, a consumer may be eligible if his or her Temporary Assistance for Needy Families household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Veteran's Pension or Survivor's Pension

If you fall into one of these examples, contact 800-417-8667.

"Does not indicate Lifeline is a federal program or Lifeline is non-transferable."

Bell Ringer To Change

Take Note

More and more of our customers are choosing to go paperless for their monthly bills. It seems logical that we do with less paper for the Bell Ringer as well. Starting with the July issue, you will see some changes in the Coop newsletter.

The first change is going from a four-page issue to a two-page issue. By moving the notices and other "required" pieces out of the Bell Ringer, we have more room for the kinds of things you truly want to know about your Cooperative.

The second change is how you receive the newsletter. The two-page version will be inserted with your monthly bill. For those of you who get a paperless bill, there will be a link to the newsletter in the email you receive each month. Not only does it save postage but it just makes sense.

Watch for the new Bell Ringer next month and let us know what you think!



*Bell
Ringer*

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Clear Lake, SD 57226-0920
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Life Runs Better on ITC

So Many Channels

By Bryan Roth, General Manager/CEO

Do you ever wonder how you can have so many channels with nothing enticing enough to watch? I constantly surf through the channel guide and find nothing of interest. Old habits are hard to break, but I find myself watching more programs that I recorded with my Digital Video Recorder (DVR). Probably the biggest driver in using the DVR is how "user-friendly" it is. Just find the movie or series you want to record and select; it really is that simple. The days of the "blinking" VCR clocks are gone.

One thing I still struggle to record is "live" sporting events. I just have a hard time watching a sporting event that has been decided. Last month, I wrote about the increasing retransmission fees charged to you from the broadcasters. Today let's touch on the channels ITC provides to you. We receive these channels via satellite, more specifically "sports" programmers. As I've stated before, programmers in the early 80's were very accommodating while negotiating contracts. Today, instead of the programmers requesting companies like ITC to carry their programming, they basically demand it, along with other less popular channels.

ITC strives to keep our programming content and costs manageable. Unfortunately, high salaries of professional athletes and large national sporting events require excessive and multiple revenue streams for the programmers. These revenue streams cover the costs when they purchase the rights to air the event(s).

We understand that not all of our customers are sports fans, but that doesn't matter to the programmers. A "one size fits all" brashness is extended to ITC and other similar cable providers.

"One Size" does not fit all, each of us has our own viewing habits. I have stated for years that most of us consistently watch seven channels or less. ITC will continue to negotiate in the best interest of our customers, but there will be a time in the not too distant future that channels will be removed because of snowballing costs.

Until then, use the resources you have to get the most out of our programming, like your DVR. Record it, save it, watch it.

Lifeline Offers Assistance

Lifeline is a federal program that lowers the monthly cost of phone and internet. Eligible customers will get at least \$9.25 toward their bill. You can only use Lifeline for either phone or internet, but not both. Only one Lifeline credit is available per household. Lifeline is designed to ensure service remains affordable to all residents.

Ask ITC for a Lifeline application. You will need the following information to apply: First and last name, address, date of birth, last four digits of your social security number (or tribal ID number). You should also show at least one of these items: Photo ID, prior year's tax return, social security card, or other document to prove your identity.

You will need to prove that you are eligible for a Lifeline benefit. The person on the official document can be you, your dependent, or a member of your household. You can show a pay stub or tax return to prove your income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines. You also can show a card or award letter to prove participation in at least one of these programs.

- Medicaid.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA).
- Veterans Pension or Survivors Pension.
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- Other Programs for Tribal Lands.

ITC will process your application and may ask you to fill out additional forms. If approved, you will receive your Lifeline discount toward your bill. If you want to apply your discount to an existing service, contact your company.

If you believe you are eligible for Lifeline, stop by the ITC office and fill out an application form or call our office at 1.800.417.8667 for assistance.



Internet Speed, How Much Is Enough?



Everywhere you turn you can find information about which Internet speeds are right for you. It can be very overwhelming. The real question is how many devices are you using in your home and what do you plan to do with them?

For starters, let's define the word megabit. A megabit is a measure of speed that your Internet can achieve. Mbps is the abbreviation for Megabits Per Second. When you see a speed offering from an Internet provider such as 30Mbps/5Mbps, the 30Mbps is the speed you can download something from the Internet. The

5Mbps is the speed you can upload something to the Internet.

Next, let's talk about what happens when you have several devices trying to use the Internet at the same time. When you have numerous devices in your home, your Internet speed is split between them. For example, if one person in your home is using a 30Mbps connection, they could reach a download speed of 30Mbps. If two people were using that same connection, the 30Mbps of download speed would be shared between the two of them. It's fairly easy to see how sharing Internet speed affects your ability to have a good experience.

The typical family of four could have four smartphones and a couple of tablets. They might also have a couple of Netflix or Hulu video streaming accounts. Before you know it, the speed you thought would cover it all is just not enough.

The hard part is there is no perfect answer for exactly how much Internet speed you will require. Your best bet is to contact one of our customer service reps and have them help you. Even better is if you are having trouble with devices not working properly or if you see buffering (pauses) when you are streaming videos, we may be able to upgrade your Internet speed that same day.

We want you to have a good Internet experience. If you have any questions, contact us at 1.800.417.8667 or stop by one of our offices. We will get you up to speed!

Directory Cover Contest - Get Those Cameras Out!



If you like to take pictures, are an amateur photographer, and a member of the Coop, we encourage you to enter our Directory Cover Contest!

What makes a good photo for the directory? One of the most important things is the size. Remember the larger the photo, the better it will look on the directory cover. Another tip is to look at last year's book. If your photo is similar to last year's winner, it probably won't be chosen. We are looking for unique photos taken in our service territory.

Some of the other rules include that photos must be suitable for a directory cover, no people, no pets. You are allowed to submit up to six photos. They must be at least a 300 resolution or the largest option on your camera. We prefer digital photos but will also accept printed ones. Make sure there are no dates on the photo. The contest is open July 1 through September 1, 2017.

The winning photo will be featured on the cover of the 2018 ITC Phone Book. The first place winner will receive a \$50 bill credit. We will also award a \$25 bill credit to the second place winner.

Photos can be emailed to photo@itctel.com. You can also mail them or drop them at one of our offices. Be sure to include your name, phone number, and a description of the photo. If you have questions, please contact Kathy at 1.800.417.8667. A complete copy of the Directory Contest rules can be found at www.itc-web.com under "About ITC."