

OKLAHOMA

Corporation Commission



PUBLIC UTILITY DIVISION
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REFORMING LIFELINE

Corporation Commission's Public Utility Staff Continues Work To Prevent Abuse of the Lifeline Program

The Oklahoma Corporation Commission's Public Utility Division (PUD) is marking Lifeline Awareness week this week by continuing its effort to prevent fraud and abuse of the program, which offers low-cost phone service to low-income Americans.

PUD Director Brandy Wreath says it's fitting that the theme for the week is "reform."

"The federal Lifeline Program has seen a huge change in Oklahoma and some other states over the past 2 years, thanks to efforts on both the state and federal level." Wreath observed. "Fraud and abuse was all-too-common in the federal program. Thanks to increased oversight and proactive enforcement, we have turned a corner. Some of the worst offenders went out of business after we filed actions against them. Others have been forced to clean up their act. After Oklahoma took action, the Federal Communications Commission increased its oversight of the program as well. The PUD staff will continue its inspections and audits of Lifeline providers. But to keep making progress, it's important that consumers be educated about the program rules and upcoming changes."

One of the biggest changes will occur February 9, 2016, when the Federal Communications Commission's new definition of what constitute "Tribal Lands" in Oklahoma takes effect. This is significant because the boundary change will result in a reduction in support for many existing Lifeline customers, with the federal subsidy dropping from \$34.25 per month to \$9.25 per month.

Under the federal Lifeline program, telephone customers who participate in or are eligible for certain public assistance programs are also eligible to receive a discount on their basic telephone service of at least \$9.25 per month. More information on program eligibility, rules and key messages is available at <http://www.fcc.gov/lifeline/outreach>. Additional information for Oklahoma consumers can be found at <http://www.occeweb.com/pu/OUSF/Lifeline%20Home.html>.

Lifeline Awareness Week is co-sponsored by the Federal Communications Commission, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, and State Utility Consumer Advocates.

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