



California Public Utilities Commission

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News Release

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PUC LIFTS SUSPENSION OF VERIFICATION PROCESS FOR CONSUMERS OF CALIFORNIA LIFELINE; ADOPTS PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

SAN FRANCISCO, May 3, 2007 – The California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) today approved a plan to improve the California LifeLine certification and verification processes for consumers.

The LifeLine program (formerly known as the Universal Lifeline Telephone Service or ULTS program) provides discounted telephone service to qualifying low-income consumers. The program currently serves about 3.5 million California residents. Consumers who are enrolled in the LifeLine program must verify annually that they are eligible to remain on the program.

On July 1, 2006, the PUC implemented a new process for verifying the participation of existing LifeLine consumers, which called for the verification to be performed by a third-party company instead of phone companies. During the transition, many consumers were confused about the change in the process so the PUC in November temporarily suspended the verification process to allow time to correct the problem. Today's decision lifts the suspension beginning June 1, 2007, and implements steps to further correct the verification issue.

"This is an ongoing process and one that showed a great team effort between consumer groups, carriers, PUC staff, and the third-party company who certifies and verifies consumers for the LifeLine program," said PUC Commissioner Dian M. Grueneich. "By lifting the suspension on verification, we can ensure that the measures we put in place today to improve the process will work."

The changes to the verification process include:

- Customers will have additional time to respond to verification requests.
- Additional reminders and notifications will be sent to consumers.

- Carriers and California LifeLine will send reminder materials to new LifeLine customers.
- There will be a gradual ramp up in the annual recertification, beginning on June 1, 2007, of an initial 20 percent of the consumers who would normally get a verification notice, which will allow the PUC to monitor the effectiveness of the new processes and modify as needed. The remaining LifeLine consumers will continue to receive service as the verification process ramps up.

For more information on the PUC or California LifeLine, please visit: www.cpuc.ca.gov or www.CalPhoneInfo.com.

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