

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
STAFF REPORT
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: April 15, 2014

REGULAR _____ CONSENT X EFFECTIVE DATE _____ N/A _____

DATE: April 7, 2014

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Jon Cray *JC*

THROUGH: Michael Dougherty *MD* and David Poston *DP*

SUBJECT: VIRGIN MOBILE USA: (Docket No. UM 1522) Petition for Waiver of OAR 860-033-0035(3).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Public Utility Commission of Oregon (Commission) grant Virgin Mobile USA, L.P.'s (Virgin Mobile's) petition for waiver of the second sentence of OAR 860-033-0035(3) with the modification that the waiver expire on September 30, 2014. Staff requests additional time to consider whether a waiver of this subsection of the rule without a time limit is supported by good cause.

DISCUSSION:

On March 24, 2014, Virgin Mobile filed a petition requesting that the Commission waive the requirements of the second sentence of OAR 860-033-0035(3). The second sentence of OAR 860-033-0035(3) states:

The Eligible Telecommunications Provider must require the low-income customer to provide the last four digits of his or her social security number or Tribal identification number before activating the OTAP or Lifeline service.

The Commission may waive any of the Division 33 administrative rules upon a showing of good cause. (See OAR 860-033-0001(2)) A waiver may be initiated upon the filing of a written request or on the Commission's own motion.

Staff proposed the amendment of OAR 860-033-0035(3) in September 2013, in Docket No. AR 574. The Commission adopted the proposed rule amendment in Order No. 13-475 entered December 19, 2014; it became effective December 20, 2013. In adopting the new rule, the Commission concurred with Staff's supporting argument that "requiring the customer to activate the Lifeline or OTAP supported service is an important tool to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse because it helps to ensure that the eligible customer is the person that receives the handset."

In its petition, Virgin Mobile describes the handset activation process it has been utilizing for its Lifeline customers in all states. Instead of the four-digit social security number required by the rules, Virgin Mobile requires customers to use a six-digit personal identification number (PIN) that they select during the application process to activate the Lifeline service. Virgin Mobile states that use of a unique PIN number accomplishes the same objective as the use of a portion of a social security number in preventing fraudulent activation of Lifeline service.

Virgin Mobile seeks expedited treatment of its request. Staff recognizes the urgent need for resolution of the issue presented because this rule is currently in effect. Virgin Mobile asserts that to comply with this rule, it must modify its activation process in Oregon, creating a different process from the other states in which it provides Lifeline services.

Staff needs time to gather information from Virgin Mobile, and perhaps other Lifeline providers,¹ to formulate a well-founded recommendation to the Commission on whether good cause exists for waiver of this portion of subsection (3). Therefore, Staff proposes that the Commission grant a waiver to Virgin Mobile until September 30, 2014.

Good cause exists to waive enforcement of this rule subsection over a limited time period. It will also allow adequate time for Staff to develop and present to the Commission a recommendation as to whether there is good cause for a longer-term waiver of the rule in question, or whether alternative measures are necessary.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

Virgin Mobile's request for waiver of the second sentence of OAR 860-033-0035(3) be granted until September 30, 2014.

¹ TracFone Wireless, Inc. has also filed a Petition for Waiver of the rule in Docket UM 1437.