

Agenda Date: December 10, 2004
Item Number: A1

Docket: UT-041937

Company Name: FSH Communications, LLC

Staff: Suzanne Stillwell, Acting AD Consumer Affairs

Staff Recommendation:

Grant the request for permanent exemption of WAC 480-120-263(3)(b), (4)(d), (5)(c) and (d), and WAC 480-120-450(1)(c), exempting the company's obligation to provide E-911 service at its pay phones located within Western State Hospital, on the condition that the company automatically directs emergency calls from its pay phones located within the hospital to the hospital's communications center.

Background:

On February 11, 2004, Qwest Corporation (Qwest) filed, and the Commission granted, a temporary exemption from WAC 480-120-263(3)(b), (4)(d), (5)(c) and (d), and WAC 120-450(1)(c). These rules require pay phone service providers to allow access to E-911 at all pay phones. The exemption allowed Qwest and Western State Hospital to conduct a 60-day trial of its Emergency Quick Access Key on three designated pay phones, redirecting E-911 calls to the hospital's communications center instead of the public safety answering point (PSAP).

On November 1, 2004, FSH Communications, LLC (FSH) filed a petition requesting exemption from WAC 480-120-263(3)(b), (4)(d), (5)(c) and (d), and WAC 120-450(1)(c). On August 23, 2004, FSH purchased Qwest's pay phones, including the pay phones located at Western State Hospital.

Instead of E-911 access, patients or other users push a 'Quick Access Key' on the pay phone, designated by the word "emergency" in bright red letters. The emergency key is directly connected to the hospital's communications center. The pay phone number is displayed by the communications center's PBX. Communications center personnel locate the ward that originated the emergency call and take appropriate action to deal with the situation. If an actual emergency exists, the call is rerouted to E-911 by the communications center.

Hospital staff has access to E-911 at all times, including in those areas where pay phones will have the Emergency Quick Access key access to E-911. Wards are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with two or more direct care staff. There are three or four phones at the central nurse's station on each ward and a phone in each individual on-ward office. All of these phones are non-pay phones and E-911 capable.

During the initial trial period, there were no (0) emergency calls directed to the hospital's communications center from the 3 phones retrofitted with the Emergency Quick Access Key. During this same period, there were 262 false E-911 calls placed by patients from pay phones located elsewhere in the hospital on pay phones that were not retrofitted with the Emergency Quick Access Key.

On July 1, 2004, Qwest asked in a subsequent petition that it be exempted from the E-911 requirements for all its pay phones located within Western State Hospital and be allowed to retrofit its pay phones with the Emergency Quick Access Key. The Commission granted, on August 11, 2004, a 60-day temporary exemption of the above-referenced rules to conduct a trial on all its pay phones located at Western State Hospital.

Discussion:

FSH and the hospital conducted a follow-up trial that included 53 pay phones from August 30, 2004, through October 28, 2004. During the trial, a total of 166 calls were directed to the hospital's communication center using the Emergency Quick Access Key. Of these calls, there were zero (0) legitimate emergencies.

This trial has significantly reduced high volumes of non-emergency and false-alarm calls being placed by patients at Western State Hospital to the Pierce County E-911 Center. Therefore, staff believes this is a reasonable request and recommends granting a permanent exemption of the above-referenced rules.

Staff consulted with Bob Oenning, E-911 Administrator, of the State's Emergency Management Division. Mr. Oenning is satisfied with the results of the trial and supports staff's recommendation for a permanent exemption.

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Conclusion:

Staff recommends the Commission grant the request for permanent exemption of WAC 480-120-263(3)(b), (4)(d), (5)(c) and (d), and WAC 480-120-450(1)(c), exempting the company's obligation to provide E-911 service at its pay phones located within Western State Hospital, on the condition that the company automatically directs emergency calls from its pay phones located within the hospital to the hospital's communications center.