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## US FCC says no cutoff for Internet phone customers

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Internet telephone providers do not have to cut off U.S. subscribers even if they are not provided enhanced 911 emergency service which gives dispatchers their location and phone number, U.S. communications regulators said on Monday.

Internet telephone providers like Nuvio Corp. had worried that the Federal Communications Commission rules adopted in May had required them to suspend by November 28 service for subscribers who cannot receive enhanced 911 (E911) service.

Existing customers did not have to be disconnected, but the FCC said Internet telephone providers would have to cease marketing and accepting new customers in areas where they are not connecting 911 calls with the person's location and phone number, according to guidance issued on Monday.

Nuvio and other providers of Internet phone service, known as Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP), last week filed challenges with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit seeking to stay the November 28 date pending their challenge.

VOIP providers have complained that they face numerous hurdles to offering enhanced 911 service, including accessing the necessary databases operated by other telecommunications providers.

"Our concern is that this marketing restriction will slow down our deployment of E911 because it gives clear incentives to some of our competitors, who control access to the 911 systems, to delay every way possible," said Chris Murray, vice president for government affairs at Vonage Holdings Corp., the biggest U.S. VOIP provider.

The FCC adopted several E911 rules for VOIP in May, including requiring 911 calls be routed to live dispatchers and the caller's location and number be identified. The move followed instances in which customers had trouble reaching help when they dialed 911.

The FCC had eased an earlier requirement that VOIP providers suspend service for those customers who failed to acknowledge the limitations of 911 capability with it.

The Voice On the Net Coalition, which represents many VOIP providers, said that roughly 750,000 customers could be affected if they had to suspend service to those who did not have enhanced 911 service available.

Less than half of the dozen VOIP providers surveyed by the coalition, 42 percent, said they would be able to provide enhanced 911 service to 100 percent of their customers with a primary fixed location by November 28.

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