



COLVILLE TRIBAL POLICE DEPARTMENT
MATT HANEY – CHIEF OF POLICE

28 OKANOGAN ST/P.O. BOX 617
NESPELEM, WASHINGTON 99155
509-634-2472



March 1, 2012

Chairman Jeffrey D. Goltz
Commissioner Pat J. Oshie
Commissioner Phillip B. Jones

Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission
1300 S. Evergreen Park Drive SW
P.O. Box 47250
Olympia, WA 99504-7250
Facsimile: (360) 586-1150

WUTC Honorable Commissioners:

Thank you for this opportunity to address the telecommunication challenges on the Colville Reservation. I have been a law enforcement officer for almost 33 years, both in Washington and Alaska, working for agencies as small as 5 officers in Bristol Bay, Alaska, and as large as the King County Sheriff's Office in Seattle, Washington. This experience should have prepared me for the communications problems on this reservation. It did not.

The Colville Tribal Police Department communications center dispatches calls for: Emergency Medical and Fire Services, Natural Resource Officers, Cigarette Tax Compliance Officers, Colville Tribal Housing and Safety Officers, Tribal Occupational Safety & Health Administration Officers, Tribal Corrections Officers, and Tribal Police Officers. The reservation covers 1.4 million acres, has four mountain passes, several state highways and thousands of visitors. Our call volume is quite heavy for a population of 10,000 residents.

Due to the current telecommunications structure all 911 calls are routed to the County dispatch centers, which upon learning that the caller is within the boundaries of the reservation then transfers the call to our Tribal center. Since both counties have E911, the caller's telephone number and physical address appears on the dispatch console screen. Unfortunately, the vast majority of telephone calls into the Tribal communications center are on our direct lines. Since these calls for emergency assistance are not routed through E911, NO telephone number and NO address shows up on the dispatch console screen. This is extremely dangerous since the caller many times does not know the address or telephone number they are calling from.

Not long after I was hired three years ago I learned of this serious problem. I contacted the Colville Tribal IT Division and learned that due to the age of our telephone system "caller ID" was NOT an option! Soon after this I purchased a home on the reservation in the Keller district with an physical address of; 12614 S. HWY 21(state highway route). During the process of the move I was told by CenturyLink that not only was "caller ID" not available, I was actually on a "partyline." Over the past two and a half years my home telephone service (509) 634-4084 has been out many times, and most recently it was out for over a month. Since there isn't any cell service near my home, one of my officers had to divert to my residence to notify me of emergencies after hours. And just to be clear my home is in the center of the reservation, NOT in a fringe area.

The antiquated substandard "partyline" service has been phased out in most of the country. While third world countries enjoy 21st Century telecommunications network services compliments of the United States the Colville Confederated Tribes reaps the benefit of substandard voice services in comparison. I am requesting that the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission require CenturyLink to upgrade their outdated "partyline infrastructure" immediately to regular single customer service lines and to upgrade their equipment so that caller ID service is available to anyone on the reservation who requests it.

If there was cell phone coverage some of these communication shortcomings could be partially mitigated. However, the reservation has few cell towers resulting in very few areas with enough signal strength to actually make or receive a call.

The solution clearly lies with CenturyLink making immediate improvements to the infrastructure of the telecommunication systems within the reservation. CenturyLink is the franchised local telephone company serving the area and has carrier of last resort responsibilities here. Century Link representatives have stated that upgrades are "somewhere" within a five year plan. However withholding of specific information on these plans makes it difficult for the Tribe to assure their members that this situation is being addressed and we should not have to wait for services like single party line and caller ID that are available throughout the country and in other areas served by CenturyLink. It seems prejudicial that the communities outside of the reservation boundaries have upgraded systems that are required for public safety while these services are not available to all residents of the reservation.

Regards,



Matt Haney, Chief of Police
Colville Confederated Tribes

cc: William Weinman, Assistant Director - Telecom Regulatory Services
Business Council, Colville Confederated Tribes
Jim Ronyak, IT Division Director, Colville Confederated Tribes