

Jason Kander

Secretary of State
Administrative Rules Division

RULE TRANSMITTAL

Administrative Rules Stamp

RECEIVED

JAN 21 2014

**SECRETARY OF STATE
ADMINISTRATIVE RULES**

Rule Number 4 CSR 240-31.060

COPY

Use a "SEPARATE" rule transmittal sheet for EACH individual rulemaking.

Name of person to call with questions about this rule:

Content Morris Woodruff Phone 573-751-2849 FAX 573-526-6010

Email address morris.woodruff@psc.mo.gov

Data Entry Chris Koenigsfeld Phone 573-751-4256 FAX 573-526-6010

Email address christine.koenigsfeld@psc.mo.gov

Interagency mailing address Public Service Commission, 9th Fl., Gov. Ofc. Bldg., JC, MO

TYPE OF RULEMAKING ACTION TO BE TAKEN

- ☐ Emergency rulemaking, include effective date
☐ Proposed Rulemaking
☐ Withdrawal ☐ Rule Action Notice ☐ In Addition ☐ Rule Under Consideration
☐ Request for Non-Substantive Change
☐ Statement of Actual Cost
☒ Order of Rulemaking

Effective Date for the Order _____

☐ Statutory 30 days OR Specific date _____

Does the Order of Rulemaking contain changes to the rule text? ☐ NO

☒ YES—LIST THE SECTIONS WITH CHANGES, including any deleted rule text:
Sections (3), (4), (5)

Small Business Regulatory
Fairness Board (DED) Stamp

JCAR Stamp

JOINT COMMITTEE ON

DEC 18 2013

ADMINISTRATIVE RULES



Commissioners

ROBERT S. KENNEY
Chairman

STEPHEN M. STOLL

WILLIAM P. KENNEY

DANIEL Y. HALL

Missouri Public Service Commission

POST OFFICE BOX 360
JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI 65102
573-751-3234
573-751-1847 (Fax Number)
<http://www.psc.mo.gov>

JOSHUA HARDEN
General Counsel

MORRIS WOODRUFF
Secretary

WESS A. HENDERSON
Director of Administration
and Regulatory Policy

CHERLYN D. VOSS
Director of Regulatory Review

KEVIN A. THOMPSON
Chief Staff Counsel

Jason Kander
Secretary of State
Administrative Rules Division
600 West Main Street
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Re: 4 CSR 240-31.060 The MoUSF Assessment

Dear Secretary Kander,

CERTIFICATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE RULE

I do hereby certify that the attached is an accurate and complete copy of the order of rulemaking lawfully submitted by the Missouri Public Service Commission.

Statutory Authority: sections 392.200, RSMo Supp. 2012, and sections 392.248 and 392.470.1, RSMo 2000

If there are any questions regarding the content of this order of rulemaking, please contact:

Morris L. Woodruff, Chief Regulatory Law Judge
Missouri Public Service Commission
200 Madison Street
P.O. Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102
(573) 751-2849
morris.woodruff@psc.mo.gov

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Morris L. Woodruff".

Morris L. Woodruff
Chief Regulatory Law Judge

**Title 4 – DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Division 240 – Public Service Commission
Chapter 31 – Universal Service**

RECEIVED

JAN 21 2014

**SECRETARY OF STATE
ADMINISTRATIVE RULES**

ORDER OF RULEMAKING

COPY

By the authority vested in the Public Service Commission under sections 392.200, RSMo Supp. 2012, and sections 392.248 and 392.470.1, RSMo 2000, the commission amends a rule as follows:

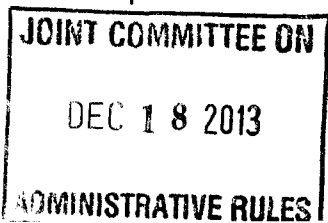
4 CSR 240-31.060 is amended.

A notice of proposed rulemaking containing the proposed amendment was published in the *Missouri Register* on September 16, 2013 (38 MoReg 1461). Those sections with changes have been reprinted here. This proposed amendment becomes effective thirty (30) days after publication in the *Code of State Regulations*.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS: The public comment period ended October 16, 2013, and the commission held a public hearing on the proposed amendment on October 21, 2013. The commission received timely written comments from the Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission; the Missouri Cable Telecommunications Association (MCTA); Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, d/b/a AT&T Missouri; CenturyTel of Missouri, LLC d/b/a CenturyLink, Embargo Missouri, Inc., d/b/a CenturyLink, Spectra Communications Group, LLC d/b/a CenturyLink, and CenturyTel of Northwest Arkansas, d/b/a CenturyLink (CenturyLink); Cricket Communications, Inc.; and the Small Telephone Company Group and the Missouri Independent Telephone Company Group (collectively STCG). In addition, the following people offered comments at the hearing: Christina Baker representing the Office of the Public Counsel; Barbara Meisenheimer on behalf of the Office of the Public Counsel; Stephanie Bell representing MCTA; Ken Woods on behalf of MCTA; Bob Gryzmala representing AT&T Missouri; Becky Kilpatrick representing CenturyLink; Bill Steinmeier representing Cricket; Brian McCartney representing STCG; Colleen Dale representing the Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission; and Natelle Dietrich on behalf of the Staff.

The commission considered this particular rule in conjunction with fourteen other rules affecting telecommunications and the Missouri Universal Service Fund. Not all persons offering comments addressed this particular rule.

COMMENT: The Commission's staff indicated it has attempted to review all commission rules relating to ETCs and the MoUSF. Most of those rules have not been revised since they were created in 1998. Aside from the need to update



the rules, revisions are necessary to bring the state rules in line with recent changes to the federal USF and Lifeline programs. Staff proposed these rulemakings to accomplish five objectives:

1. Consolidate within one chapter of the Missouri rules all requirements pertaining to Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) and the Missouri Universal Service Fund (MoUSF);
2. Rescind high-cost support rules;
3. Clarify and codify existing MoUSF Board responsibilities and procedures;
4. Update and clarify Lifeline program requirements; and
5. Update and clarify ETC requirements.

Staff said there are approximately seventy landline and wireless companies in Missouri with ETC status. Companies with ETC status may receive USF funding for participation in the high-cost program or the Lifeline program, or both. The federal USF high-cost program provides financial support to an ETC for the provisioning of voice or broadband service, or both, to high-cost areas. The MoUSF does not currently offer high-cost support. The federal Lifeline program provides similar support to companies for the provision of discounted voice service to qualifying low-income customers. The MoUSF provide financial support to landline phone providers for service to qualifying low-income and disabled customers.

State commissions are responsible under federal law for determining which telecommunications companies may be designated as an ETC in their states. In addition, the state commissions are responsible for an annual certification process to allow ETCs to continue to receive high-cost support.

Federal high-cost programs and the Lifeline program have recently been subject to intense criticism and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has implemented significant reforms in those programs. The state commissions also have authority to impose additional state-specific requirements on ETCs to ensure compliance with state Lifeline programs so long as those additional requirements do not conflict with federal requirements.

RESPONSE: The commission thanks its staff for its general comments. The commission will address staff's comments about specific rule provisions in the appropriate rulemaking.

COMMENT: The MCTA generally supports the commission's efforts to revise these rules. In particular, it supports the proposed deletion of rules relating to the high-cost component of the MoUSF in recognition of the fact that no such support is currently authorized and is unlikely to be authorized in the future. The MCTA also offered comments about specific provisions of the rules.

RESPONSE: The commission thanks the MCTA for its general comments and will address its comments about specific rule provisions in the appropriate rulemaking.

COMMENT: AT&T Missouri is critical of many aspects of the proposed rule changes. As part of a large company operating in many states, AT&T Missouri wants to see Missouri's rules closely adhere to federal standards imposed by the FCC. AT&T Missouri is concerned that additional state requirements would unnecessarily impose additional regulatory burdens.

AT&T Missouri also explains that recent federal regulatory efforts in this area have been focused on the Connect America Fund (CAF) which is aimed at providing high-cost universal service support for increasing broadband availability in areas lacking a private sector business case for broadband deployment. AT&T Missouri warns against erecting state regulatory barriers to the acceptance of CAF funds to provide service to Missouri customers.

AT&T offered numerous comments about specific provisions of the rules.

RESPONSE: The commission thanks AT&T Missouri for its general comments. The commission will attempt to balance the interests of telecommunications providers in having a streamlined regulatory process against the need to ensure that the USF programs are run efficiently. The commission will address AT&T Missouri's comments about specific rule provisions in the appropriate rulemaking.

COMMENT: CenturyLink generally urges the commission to retain its current rules regarding potential high-cost support from the MoUSF as such support is still authorized by Missouri statute, even though no such program has been established. Furthermore, CenturyLink asks the commission to ensure that the standards imposed by its rules are aligned with and not in excess of those imposed by the FCC. CenturyLink also offered comments about specific provision of the rules.

RESPONSE: The commission thanks CenturyLink for its general comments. The commission will attempt to balance the interests of telecommunications providers in having a streamlined regulatory process against the need to ensure that the USF programs are run efficiently and Missouri consumers are protected. The commission will address CenturyLink's comments about specific rule provisions in the appropriate rulemaking.

COMMENT: Cricket is primarily concerned about the use of electronic forms to collect applications from customers and offers specific comments in that regard.

RESPONSE: The commission thanks Cricket for its general comments and will address its specific comments in the appropriate rulemaking.

COMMENT: STCG represents Missouri's small, mostly rural incumbent telephone companies. STCG would like the commission to consider creation of a state high-cost USF fund. For that reason it asks the commission to retain a portion of the rules relating to such a fund. STCG also offers comments about specific provisions of the rules.

RESPONSE: The commission thanks STCG for its general comments and will address its specific comments in the appropriate rulemaking.

COMMENT: Public Counsel reminds the commission that it has a statutory obligation to preserve and advance universal service in this state. To that end, Public Counsel urges the commission to protect elements of such service, such as interexchange service, access to directory assistance, and access to operator services, rather than merely seeking to align Missouri rules with those offered by the FCC. Public Counsel also offers comments about specific provisions of the rules.

RESPONSE: The commission thanks Public Counsel for its general comments. The commission will attempt to balance the interests of telecommunications providers in having a streamlined regulatory process against the need to ensure that the USF programs are run efficiently and Missouri consumers are protected. The commission will address Public Counsel's specific comments in the appropriate rulemaking.

COMMENT: Subsection (3)(A) as published in the Missouri Register requires "certificated" telecommunications companies to certify their revenue for purposes of determining the amount of their MoUSF assessment. AT&T Missouri suggests the word "certificated" be removed from that requirement because AT&T Missouri operates under a state charter rather than a certificate and should not be excluded from paying a MoUSF assessment.

RESPONSE AND EXPLANATION OF CHANGE: The commission will remove the word "certificated" from subsection (3)(A).

COMMENT: Subsection 4(A) as published in the Missouri Register requires carriers subject to a MoUSF assessment to place a surcharge on their customer's bill to collect that surcharge. Staff proposes to add a sentence to that subsection to allow a company with *de minimis* revenues to begin assessing the surcharge sixty days after it meets a \$24,000 net jurisdictional threshold. No other commenter addressed staff's proposed change.

MCTA comments that both subsection (4)(A) and (4)(D) require a carrier to recover its MoUSF assessment from its customers by collecting a surcharge. MCTA contends the carriers should be allowed the discretion to recover its assessment by some other means if it chooses to do so. Staff replied to MCTA's suggestion indicating that it does not object to making recovery through a surcharge optional. However, staff does object to the language proposed by MCTA that would allow the carrier to recover the assessment through a line item identified only as a "state regulatory fee or charge". Staff is concerned that an inexact description in the customer's bill can be used to obscure the source of other charges imposed on the customer.

RESPONSE AND EXPLANATION OF CHANGE: The commission will add the sentence about *de minimis* revenues proposed by staff. MCTA's proposal to make collection of the MoUSF assessment by a surcharge optional will allow these competitive companies the flexibility to collect that assessment from their customers in whatever way they choose. That is reasonable and the commission will make that change. However, staff's concerns about proper description of the surcharge is also important. The commission will modify the language proposed by MCTA to ensure that the surcharge is properly described.

COMMENT: MCTA suggests that subsection (5)(B) be modified to retain the language in the current rule that allows for quarterly remittances to the fund administrator as an option to monthly remittances. MCTA also proposes grammatical changes in paragraphs (5)(A)1 and 2.

RESPONSE AND EXPLANATION OF CHANGE: The grammatical changes suggested by MCTA are appropriate and will be adopted. However, the concern about quarterly remittances is puzzling. The current rule and the amendment as published in the Missouri Register already allow for quarterly remittances. Further, the language proposed by MCTA is exactly the same as the amended language published in the Missouri Register. As a result, no other change in the published amendment is necessary.

4 CSR 240-31.060 The MoUSF Assessment

(3) Assessment Level.

(A) In February each year, the MoUSFA shall issue a form on which each registered IVolP provider and telecommunications company shall certify the company's Missouri net jurisdictional revenues for the prior calendar year.

(4) Collection of MoUSF Assessment from Customers.

If an assessable carrier chooses to recover its MoUSF assessment through a line item on a retail end-user customers' bill, then:

(A) The surcharge shall equal the percentage assessment ordered by the commission;

(B) The surcharge shall be detailed as "Missouri Universal Service Fund.

(C) The surcharge percentage shall be applied to each customer's total charges associated with the carrier's net jurisdictional revenues.

(D) A company with *de minimis* revenues may begin assessing the surcharge within sixty (60) days of meeting the \$24,000 net jurisdictional revenue threshold.

5) Remitting MoUSF Assessments.

(A) All assessable carriers shall remit in either of the following methods:

1. A carrier may remit all funds received as a result of the application of the surcharge as provided in (4) above, in full satisfaction of the carrier's annual percentage assessment, or

2. A carrier may remit an amount based solely on applying the percentage assessment to the carrier's Missouri net jurisdictional revenue. If this method is used, no refunds shall be given if a carrier subsequently finds it remitted more than it collected.