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**PSC Chair Urges Montanans to
“Stay Connected” with Telephone Assistance**

Greg Jergeson, Chair of the Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) is urging Montanans to “stay connected” by reaching out to those who can’t afford needed phone service, and urging them to participate in two programs--Link-Up and Lifeline--designed to assist individuals with both the installation and monthly phone costs of participating companies.

“Staying connected to local resources and emergency services can improve--and very likely save--lives,” observes Jergeson. “In these days of high-tech gadgetry, it is easy to forget that some Montanans cannot afford what is now considered a very basic communication tool, telephone service.”

September 14-20, 2009 has been designated nationally as “Lifeline Awareness Week” and the Montana PSC is using the opportunity to promote the programs. Link-Up provides a 50% reduction in the telephone service installation charge, up to a maximum of \$30, for qualifying households that do not currently have telephone service. Under Lifeline, telephone customers who are eligible for certain public assistance programs are also eligible to receive discounted basic telephone service; participants often save more than \$13 a month. To find out more about these programs, including how to apply, contact your local telephone company, county office of public assistance, the PSC at 1-800-646-6150, or click on <http://www.lifeline.gov>.

Made up of 5 elected commissioners, the PSC works to ensure that Montanans receive safe and reliable service from regulated public utilities while paying reasonable rates. Utilities regulated by the PSC generally include private investor-owned natural gas, electric, telephone, water, and sewer companies. In addition, the PSC regulates certain motor carriers, and oversees natural gas pipeline safety and intrastate railroad safety.

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