

## **Are your cell phone calls to the Almond-Bancroft School District not always connecting correctly?**

We have been aware of this issue for quite some time, but it is beyond our direct control. As more of you are calling the school via your cell phone rather than a "land line", more of you are now experiencing the issue as well. We would like to take this opportunity to "shed some light" on the issue.

This problem is a national issue known as the "National Call Termination Issue", which the FCC is still working on resolving. Some carriers are using "least cost routing" which sometimes sends a call down a lesser quality circuit. If a call is "damaged" before it makes it to its last "local phone service" provider (Union Telephone Company in our case), they cannot "fix it" before the call is sent on to its final destination (our school in this instance) potentially causing the call to not be handled or completed as desired.

We have known this issue to occur most frequently when calling the school via a cell phone, due to the calls translation from "wireless" to "land line" over several circuits and networks. However, the issue can also occur with any non-Union Telephone customer calling a Union Telephone customer, as the call is originating from outside the Union Telephone network. Any call from a non-Union Telephone network customer to any Union Telephone network customer has the possibility of being "broken" before it arrives at its destination, possibly causing the call to not be handled or completed as desired, due to this NCT issue.

The next page is a copy of a letter from the National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA). This short letter explains this problem in more detail and provides suggested consumer actions, including a link to the FCC and a phone number to call if you are experiencing this issue and would like to report it.

# Call Termination Issues

## Talking Points for Local Exchange Carriers

### April 2011

#### **Background**

Many rural telephone subscribers have been experiencing a variety of call termination issues. These issues include, but are not limited to:

1. The calling party hears ringing but the called party hears nothing;
2. The called party hears ringing but hears only dead air when they answer;
3. Unusually long call set-up times, sometimes as long as 50 seconds;
4. Garbled, one way or otherwise poor quality voice on completed calls;
5. Inability to receive Faxes;
6. Missing or altered Caller ID.

#### **Scope and Industry Response**

- Several national telephone associations have gathered information on the scope of these issues and concluded this is an epidemic affecting the routing of calls to customers in rural areas nationwide.
- The problem occurs on calls originated using a variety of telephone technologies including land-line, wireless, cable, and VoIP.
- The telephone company has no control over these issues – the problems occur before the call ever reaches their network, if the call reaches their network at all.
- The national telephone associations are collecting data to provide to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for further investigation into this problem.

#### **Suggested Consumer Action**

- Calling parties should open a trouble ticket with their own originating carrier or service provider when they determine they cannot reach the called party or they experience poor call quality.
- When reporting the problem to the originating carrier or provider, the calling party should include the following details:
  - o Date and time of call
  - o The number that was used to place the call
  - o The number that was called
  - o Description of the problem (i.e. dead air, ringing with no answer, etc.)
- Consumers attempting to place calls which do not connect or are experiencing call quality issues are encouraged to call the same number using a different service provider or use a “dial-around” option. This often demonstrates that the called number is actually in good working order.
- Consumers who do not receive reliable service or a satisfactory response from their originating carrier or service provider should consider filing a complaint with your PUC and/or the FCC.
  - o Complaints to the FCC may be addressed to:

<http://esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm>, or 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322)