



PRESS RELEASE
GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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PSC Takes Action On Two New Laws—HB 1003 and HB 1568

ATLANTA – At its May 7, 2002, Administrative Session, the Georgia Public Service Commission took the first step to comply with the provisions of the recently enacted HB 1003, Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program. The new law requires the Commission to establish, implement, administer and promote a program by March 31, 2003 to provide telecommunications equipment (primarily text telephones) to hearing or speech impaired Georgians whose income does not exceed 200% of the federal poverty level.

Today, the Commission approved a staff request to increase the monthly Telecommunications Relay Service surcharge from \$0.05 to \$0.15 per telephone line effective August 1, 2002, or the first billing cycle thereafter, in order to implement this equipment distribution program.

Through this program eligible individuals will be furnished with telephone equipment to access Georgia's Telecommunications Relay Service, a statewide dual party relay service in place since 1991. This service allows hearing and speech impaired persons to use the public telephone network to communicate with residential and business hearing and voice subscribers.

The Georgia Council For The Hearing Impaired estimates that there are approximately 812,000 Georgians with some level of hearing loss and about 1%, or about 8,000, who are profoundly deaf. The eligibility pool for the distribution of this equipment is somewhere in between these two numbers, subject to medical and financial eligibility screening.

In a separate action, the Commissioners approved the issuance of proposed rules relating to Electric Membership Corporations' (EMC) becoming certificated natural gas marketers. HB 1568, the Natural Gas Consumers' Relief Act signed into law on April 25, removed legal restrictions that prevented EMCs from selling natural gas.

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