

NORTHERN TELEPHONE COMPANY  
13448 County Road 25  
Wawina, MN  
SAC: 361500  
Utility ID: 10736

Northern Telephone Company is a small rural telecommunications provider serving a 30 square mile area in Wawina, MN located in Itasca County in northern Minnesota. Northern Telephone serves 32 voice and internet customers. Wawina has the distinction of having America's smallest telephone company. Northern Telephone does not serve any tribal lands.

Northern Telephone Company receives high-cost funds via the Revised ACAM I program. Northern Telephone receives \$10,137.86 on an annual basis in support. These funds are being utilized to build high-speed fiber broadband to our customer base. As of March 31, 2021, Northern Telephone has met 43.78% of its build-out milestones, which is in compliance with ACAM I requirements.

As part of the stipulations of being an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC), Northern Telephone Company offers low-income support through the Federal Lifeline Program and the Minnesota Telephone Assistance Program (TAP). Northern Telephone employs 1.5 staff members. Shane Young, the owner and president of the company serves as the customer contact for Lifeline services as well as the trainer for the part-time employee. Both employees are well versed in the Lifeline and TAP programs and can assist customers with questions, applications, verifications and certifications.

Northern Telephone currently has 5 lifeline subscribers receiving the full federal lifeline credit and the full MN TAP credit. That is 16% of its customer base. Clearly, Northern Telephone is doing what is needed to meet the Lifeline requirements. We know our customers by name and are continuously interacting with them in our small community. Each current customer receives a bill notice of Lifeline and TAP on an annual basis (attached). The message also appears on any and all past due and disconnect notices. Any new customer receives the information upon sign up. Any potential customer that calls in is informed of the programs as needed. All Lifeline and TAP information is also printed in our tariff which is on file at the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission's E-filing system, and available at our office (copy attached).

Northern Telephone does not currently have a website. Our first priority is to use the high-cost money for what it is intended, to deliver high-speed broadband connections to rural areas. Once customers are able to get on-line with our service, we will investigate a possible website and a social media presence, if these are affordable. Because this area is so rural and small, there is no local newspaper. The nearest Health and Human Services office is approximately 30 miles away and the employees there are aware of the Lifeline and TAP programs and can direct any client to us if needed. Northern will consider participating in Lifeline Awareness week in the future.

According to the U.S. Census of 2010, the demographics of Wawina is 99.9% Caucasian, so very little, if any, diversity. Also, according to that census, there were 9.5% of families and 7.4% of the population living below the poverty line, including 7.1% under the age of eighteen and none over the age of 64. Considering these numbers, our Lifeline subscribership of 16% is above what the census levels would dictate for need.

## Annual Notice to Residential Customers for Telephone Assistance Plan (TAP) and the Federal Lifeline Program

You may be eligible for assistance in paying your telephone bill if you receive benefits from certain low-income assistance programs. For more information or an application, please contact:

**Northern Telephone Company**  
**13448 County Road 25**  
**Wawina, MN 55736**  
**(218) 777-1100**  
[Office@wildernessvalley.tel](mailto:Office@wildernessvalley.tel)

Minnesota's Telephone Assistance Plan (TAP) offers a monthly credit of \$7.00 on your landline telephone service. You may receive the TAP credit on one landline per household.

The federal Lifeline Program offers a monthly discount of \$5.25 on landline telephone service plans. Lifeline also offers discounts on wireless telephone service plans and some broadband internet service plans. You may receive the Lifeline discount on one telephone or broadband service per household. The federal Lifeline Program incorporates the broadband discount (not applicable to TAP). If you live on Tribal lands, you may qualify for additional discounts.

You must show proof that you or a member of your household participates in at least one of the following programs or is income eligible:

- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Medicaid/Medical Assistance (MA)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Veterans Pension or Survivors Pension Benefit Programs
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance living on Tribal lands
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) living on Tribal lands
- Tribally-administered Head Start (for those meeting income-qualifying standards) living on Tribal lands
- Tribally-administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TTANF) living on Tribal lands

If you do not participate in any of the programs listed above, you may qualify if your income is at or below 135% of the 2021 Federal Poverty Income Guidelines:

Number of People Living in the Home	Household Income (at or Below)
1	\$17,388
2	\$23,517
3	\$29,646
4	\$35,775
5	\$41,904
6	\$48,033
7	\$54,162
8	\$60,291
*For each Additional Person	Add \$6,129

LOCAL EXCHANGE SERVICE

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LIFELINE AND MINNESOTA TELEPHONE ASSISTANCE PLAN (TAP)

The Lifeline Assistance (Lifeline) program, established by the Federal Communications Commission under 47CFR54, is a means of maintaining and preserving universal service by providing a reduction in the recurring price of basic local residential exchange access service to qualifying low income residential subscribers.

TAP is a state sponsored assistance program under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 237 and is designed to make telephone service accessible to qualifying low-income residential households. Through this program, eligible households will receive a monthly discount on their telephone service.

1. GENERAL

- A. Lifeline is a federally-funded reduction of the subscriber line charge (SLC) and a reduction of local service charges. The maximum rate changes depending on the company's approved SLC tariffs.
- B. Federal Universal Service Fund End User Charge will not be billed to Lifeline customers.
- C. Local service for Lifeline subscribers may not be disconnected for non-payment of toll charges.
  - 1) Toll Restriction Service will be provided to Lifeline subscribers at no charge.
  - 2) Lifeline subscribers are not required to accept Toll Restriction Service as a condition to avoid disconnection of local service for non-payment of toll.
  - 3) Lifeline subscribers are not required to pay a service deposit in order to initiate service if the subscriber voluntarily elects to receive Toll Restriction Service.
- D. Partial payments from Lifeline subscribers will be applied first to local service charges and then to toll charges.

2. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- A. Lifeline will be provided for one (1) telephone line per household, at the subscriber's principal place of residence, to those individuals who meet the eligibility requirements.
- B. The applicant has income at or below 135 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or participates in one of the following programs:
  - Medicaid (T)
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Plane (SNAP) (T)
  - Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (T)
  - Federal Public Housing Assistance
  - Veterans Pension & Survivors Pension Benefit (T)

LOCAL EXCHANGE SERVICE

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LIFELINE AND MINNESOTA TELEPHONE ASSISTANCE PLAN (TAP) (Continued)

2. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS (Continued)

Individuals who qualify under the above mentioned Tribal Programs because they live on or near a federally recognized reservation may qualify under these Tribal Programs;

- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Head Start
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

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- C. The applicant signs a document certifying under penalty of perjury that the applicant receives benefits from one of the programs listed and identifying the program or programs from which that consumer receives benefits.
- D. The applicant signs a document agreeing to notify the carrier if that consumer ceases to participate in the program or programs. When the company is notified by the customer that the customer no longer participates in one of the above programs, the federal credits to that customer's monthly charges shall cease beginning with the start of the billing cycle beginning in the month after the month in which notification is received.

3. ELIGIBILITY REVOCATION

If the telephone company discovers that conditions exist that disqualify the recipient of Lifeline Assistance, the support will be discontinued. The customer will be billed retroactively to whichever is the most recent of the dates Lifeline assistance commenced or the recipient no longer qualified for the service not to exceed 12 months.

4. ELIGIBILITY FOR THE STATE TAP CREDIT

- A. The state TAP credit is only available to residential subscribers who meet the eligibility requirements for the Federal Lifeline Credit in 2 above.
- B. The customer must reside in Minnesota or have moved to Minnesota and intend to remain.

LOCAL EXCHANGE SERVICE

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LIFELINE AND MINNESOTA TELEPHONE ASSISTANCE PLAN (TAP) (continued)

5. REGULATIONS

- A. The Federal Lifeline and state TAP credit will begin at the customer's earliest possible billing cycle but no later than the second billing cycle after the date the application for the Federal Lifeline and state TAP credit is received by the telephone company.
- B. A service charge shall not be billed to establish qualification for either the Federal Lifeline or state TAP credit.
- C. When a customer enrolls for the state TAP credit, the Company is reimbursed for the cost of the service order activity.

6. FUNDING

The Federal Lifeline Credit is funded through the FCC universal service program. The state TAP credit shall be funded through the state Telephone Assistance Plan Surcharge on residence and business access lines which pay the 911 surcharge.

7. RATES

The surcharge rate is the effective rate ordered by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. The company is responsible for billing, collecting and remitting the surcharge to the appropriate government agency.