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BEFORE
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

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In the Matter of the Commission Investigation)
Into the Allocation of the 811 Dialing Code)
For Use By One Call Notification Systems in)
Providing Advance Notice of Excavation)
Activities to Underground Facilities Operators.)

Case No. 05-1306-TP-COI

COMMENTS OF MCI

I. INTRODUCTION

By Entry dated November 4, 2005 the Commission invited comments regarding the implementation of the 811 dialing code for use by One Call notification systems providing advance notice of excavation activities to underground facilities operators ("One Call" centers). At paragraph 2 of the Entry, the Commission specifically solicited information as to whether it would be possible for two One Call centers operating in the same area to receive 811 calls. Alternatively, if such an approach is not possible, the Commission has requested suggestions as to how the qualifications of each One Call center should be assessed, and how, procedurally, the Commission should go about choosing a One Call center (Entry, ¶2, page 2).

The MCI Ohio operating subsidiaries ("MCI") own and operate underground facilities throughout the state of Ohio. MCI is an active member of the Ohio Utilities Protection Service (OUPS) and an MCI employee sits on the board of trustees of that organization. MCI is also a member of the National Telecommunications Damage Prevention Council (NTDPC). For all of the reasons set forth in the comments below, MCI believes that OUPS should be the statewide One Call center to receive 811 calls.

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II. IT IS NEITHER PRACTICAL NOR FEASIBLE FOR MULTIPLE CALL CENTERS TO RECEIVE 811 CALLS.

It is MCI's assumption that the Commission, when referring to the two One Call centers operating in Ohio, meant OUPS and the Ohio Oil & Gas Producers Underground Protection Service (OGPUPS). However, before turning to the issue of which organization would be better suited to receive 811 calls, the Commission first must determine whether more than one organization, operating in the same area, can (or should) receive such calls.

The answer to this inquiry is "no". In the first place, the technical feasibility of having two call centers receiving 811 calls in the same region is questionable. The Commission will recall that in the case of the allocation of the 211 dialing code, the umbrella organizations of information and referral agencies, the Ohio Council of Information and Referral Providers and the 211 Collaborative (OCIRP/211 Collaborative) were chosen to select the appropriate call center in each Ohio county. The technical details of call routing were then left to the local carriers and the designated referral center. See *In the Matter of the Commission Investigation Into Abbreviated Dialing Codes, Such As N-11* Case No. 93-1799-TP-COI (Finding and Order, June 21, 2001). Clearly the abbreviated dialing code calls can physically be placed to one call center only. Thus, if two organizations are operating in the same area, each with different participating companies as members, calls would have to be transferred back and forth between the two centers. Even if technically feasible, this requirement would certainly raise the operational costs to participating companies and might ultimately require the underground facilities operators to join both organizations. Increasing the costs of

participating in an organization that is dedicated to protecting public safety serves no public purpose. There is no reason for the Commission to choose the multiple call center option.

III. THE OUPS IS BEST SUITED TO BE THE STATEWIDE ONE CALL CENTER.

Of the two operating One Call organizations, OUPS is the only organization suited to be the statewide One Call center. OUPS was incorporated in Ohio 1971, and is the acknowledged leader in the one call industry. A board of trustees consisting of 21 representatives from different industry groups is elected by the member companies. Full member utility companies have increased from 144 in 1990 to over 600 in 2005. In addition, limited basis participants have increased the total OUPS membership to over 900 companies or governmental bodies. The OUPS board of trustees includes company representatives from a wide spectrum of utilities and other underground facilities owners, excavators and governmental entities, including First Energy, Time Warner Cable, Cinergy, Columbia Gas Transmission, George J. Igel & Company, the Franklin County Engineer, BP Oil Pipeline, Inc., Alltel, SBC and Verizon, as well as MCI. Member companies include every utility industry owning/operating underground facilities in the state. The OUPS mission is to serve the customers' needs by providing a quality One Call process to protect the public, the underground infrastructure and the environment.

OUPS has 60 employees and conducts operations out of its own facilities in Youngstown, Ohio. Service is provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. By using the latest technologies available, OUPS handled 906,929 calls in 2004, and sent out over 5 million excavation notifications. OUPS is on track to meet or exceed those numbers in 2005. In addition, OUPS is technologically positioned to respond appropriately to a

sudden increase in excavation notices resulting from the 811 implementation, if that should occur.

OUPS provides customized support in the management of each member's facility database. The database is constantly being updated through a variety of methods including GPS. This allows OUPS to identify 99+% of streets when locate requests are made. The OUPS mapping system is considered to be the most accurate in the state. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) regularly uses the OUPS mapping system for its public work. OUPS provides a Web interface that allows members to constantly monitor and adjust their individual databases to ensure that facility extensions are protected and properly registered. Excavation notices can be generated securely by using the Internet entry application known as IDIG. The Internet application has been widely accepted and is currently approximately 24% of OUPS overall ticket volume.

OUPS has a total disaster recovery contingency plan which utilizes AT&T's advanced call routing feature in order to continue taking calls during a disaster. It maintains a duplicate data base server housed in AT&T's data center in Mesa, Arizona. Should the Ohio operation go down for any reason, it can be brought back on line within 20 minutes.

In addition to its notification and database management functions, the OUPS underwrites and sponsors the Ohio Damage Prevention Councils throughout the state. These regional groups bring excavators, designers, facility owners, facility locators, and other interested parties together to resolve problems, collaborate on projects, identify process improvements, and to enhance safety in general. OUPS expends significant funds in educating both the public and private sectors of the excavation industry involved

in digging (For 2004 -- \$433,408.12; through 10/31/05 -- \$402,378.30). OUPS also coordinates the Emergency Responder / Professional Excavator Educational program on behalf of the pipeline companies in Ohio. This is a vital element of DOT's mandated public outreach / public awareness programs.

In contrast to the broad membership and extensive activities conducted by OUPS, the OGPUPS serves a much more limited function. According to the OGPUPS website¹, this one call center is sponsored by the Ohio Oil & Gas Association and its membership apparently is limited to members of that industry. Indeed, the OGPUPS website contains a specific disclaimer advising excavators that OGPUPS is *not* OUPS:

The Oil & Gas Producers Underground Protection Service (OGPUPS) provides underground oil and gas pipeline protection services. OGPUPS and the Ohio Oil & Gas Association (OOGA) are not related to or affiliated in any manner with the Ohio Utilities Protection Service, an organization that also provides services that deal with underground facilities, and which may be reached at 1-800-362-2764.

Thus, as discussed above, should the OGPUPS be chosen as the One Call center to receive 811 calls, the OGPUPS business plan would have to be substantially changed to include members from all industries. It is unlikely that OGPUPS has the technological capability to provide the level of services currently being provided by OUPS. Thus, in areas where OGPUPS would serve as the One Call operator, the members of OUPS would be required to also join OGPUPS and to pay for the upgrades needed to bring OGPUPS to the OUPS level. There simply is no need for this duplication of expenses, and the public interest would not be served.

¹ The OGPUPS website can be found at: www.ogpups.com. The OUPS website address is: www.oups.org.

As noted above, MCI is also a member of NTDPC. That organization has submitted comments in the form of a letter to the Commission filed in this docket, and MCI supports those views as well as providing its own comments herein.


IV. THE COMMISSION MAY SELECT OUPS AS THE ONE CALL CENTER AS PART OF THIS PROCEEDING.

The Commission has also requested that interested parties comment on how, procedurally, the One Call center should be chosen when two call centers are operating in one area. It is MCI's position that this selection can be made in the course of this proceeding, after the comments and reply comments have been evaluated. Just as the Commission selected the OCRIP/211 Collaborative to coordinate the establishment of call centers in each Ohio county, the FCC has specifically delegated to the Commission the task of analyzing the issues involved with the various organizations requesting designation as the 811 call center. Indeed, in this situation many members of the one call organizations are PUCO regulated utilities, giving the Commission a unique perspective on the important public safety and environmental issues associated with underground utility facilities. It is well within the jurisdiction of the Commission to determine the organization that is best situated to serve the public and the regulated public utility industry. In MCI's opinion, that organization is OUPS.

V. CONCLUSION

MCI appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments and to participate in the 811 call center designation process. The Commission is urged to very carefully consider all of the issues addressed by the parties in this docket, and to support OUPS as the statewide One Call center.

Respectfully submitted,



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