

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA**

**NEWS RELEASE**

**Tuesday, May 27, 2008**

**Commissioners Clark, Wefald and Cramer**

**\*\*For Immediate Release\*\***

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**Use of Wireless Phones continues to increase in North Dakota**

More than 23,000 additional wireless phones were activated in North Dakota in the past year as people continue to cut the cord on landline phones.

It is estimated there are 427,910 wireless phones currently in use in North Dakota, an increase of 23,442 or nearly six percent from 2007. Land line phones, which number approximately 305,973, decreased by 10,978 or nearly 3.4 percent in 2008. The total number of all phones increased from 721,419 to 733,883 in 2008.

“The number of wireless phones continues to increase as more and more people consider them a convenient alternative to the traditional wireline phone,” said Commissioner Tony Clark, who holds the Commission’s Telecommunications portfolio. “The day has clearly passed where the wireless phone was viewed solely as a luxury item.”

Clark said an expanding wireless infrastructure is helping increase the number of people who can use wireless phones in their area. Although the commission cannot order companies to build towers in specific areas, it has been aggressive in lobbying for coverage in communities.

“Wireless companies build new towers every year to give more people access to wireless technology,” said Commissioner Susan Wefald. “With the Zap the Gap program, the Commission has been a leader in advocating the need for coverage in communities across the state.”

Since 2004 the Commission has visited communities throughout the state with its Zap the Gap program. The Commission holds town hall meetings to gather information about coverage needs, and the information is presented to wireless companies. Most of the communities the Commission visited now have cell phone towers.

The report also revealed some insights into the competition among wired telecommunications providers.

Competitive Local Exchange Carriers (CLECS), now serve 75,458 lines, which is an increase of 5,735 from last year. Incumbent carriers now serve an estimated 230,515 lines, a decrease of 16,713 from last year.

“These numbers demonstrate the increasingly competitive nature of modern telecommunications services,” said Commissioner Kevin Cramer. “When technology is allowed and encouraged to develop within the marketplace, the need for government oversight is decreased and consumers are the big winners.”

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