Potential Loss of Cell Phone Coverage to Rural Vermont

Legislative Action Alert, March 21, 2018

Twenty-six rural towns across the state are likely to lose cell phone coverage within the next week as a result of Vanu CoverageCo closing its doors. Last Thursday, Public Service Department staff informed the legislature that the company, which expanded cell phone coverage to rural Vermont, would cease operations due to financial difficulties. According to Clay Purvis, Director of Telecommunications and Connectivity of the Public Service Department, CoverageCo provides limited, wholesale coverage to Verizon Wireless, Sprint PCS, T-Mobile, and US Cellular. Retail users of these services in CoverageCo's coverage areas may lose services, such as the ability to call 911 from a mobile phone. According to a representative of the E-911 Board, approximately 70 percent of 911 calls now come in via cell phones. Likewise, emergency service providers will lose the ability to contact the hospital when transporting patients from unserved areas. As well, CoverageCo supports cell service for Grace Cottage Hospital as well as schools within its service areas.

The 26 towns are Brighton, Canaan, Chelsea, Fairlee, Granville, Groton, Halifax, Hancock, Jamaica, Middlebury, Newfane, Norton, Readsboro, Ripton, Roxbury, Ryegate, Strafford, Thetford, Topsham, Townsend, Vershire, Washington, Whitingham, Wilmington, Wolcott, and Woodstock.

Saving Vermont’s microcell network is an essential public safety, health care, and economic growth imperative. Contact your legislators and the governor. Tell them that it is unacceptable to lose cell coverage in 26 towns and that the Public Service Department, Department of Health, and Department of Public Safety must help keep microcells alive while a transition and sustainable service plan is developed. Urge your legislators to direct the departments to ensure that statewide cell service is maintained now and in the future.

To contact your legislators, find their email on the legislative website [1], or call the Sergeant at Arms at 802-828-2228 to leave a message. And please copy Karen Horn (khorn@vlct.org [2]) at VLCT on your correspondence. Thank you!
Links
[2] mailto:khorn@vlct.org