

CONSUMER ADVOCATE
F. Anne Ross

ASSISTANT
CONSUMER ADVOCATE
Kenneth E. Traum

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE



OFFICE OF CONSUMER ADVOCATE
21 S. Fruit St., Suite 18
Concord, N.H. 03301-2429

TDD Access: Relay NH
1-800-735-2964

Tel. (603) 271-1172

FAX No. 271-1177

Website:
www.oca.nh.gov

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Consumer Alert: New Hampshire Office of Consumer Advocate Relays
Warning to VoIP Consumers**

The nation's utility consumer advocates are warning many customers of Internet-based telephone service (known as Voice over Internet Protocol, or VoIP) that they must respond by **August 29, 2005** to notices being sent out by their providers or face disconnection from their service the following day.

"It is crucial that consumers respond to the notice from their provider if they wish to keep their Internet-based telephone service," said John R. Perkins, President of the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA) and consumer advocate for the state of Iowa. "Beyond the need to take action to avoid being disconnected, consumers should use the notices as an opportunity to fully explore the differences between traditional home telephone service and calls made over broadband," said David Bergmann of the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel and chair of NASUCA's Telecommunications Committee.

Partly in response to recent tragedies, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has required providers whose VoIP service does not include enhanced 9-1-1 (E 9-1-1) capability, or whose E 9-1-1 has limitations, to send notices to all of their customers. E 9-1-1 technology automatically identifies the caller's address and telephone number to the emergency operator, potentially saving time and lives.

The notices are intended to alert consumers so they will not mistakenly think that their VoIP service will handle 9-1-1 calls in the same manner as a traditional telephone system. Companies have been sending the required notices by various means, including electronically and standard mail. If customers of Internet-based telephone service have not yet received a notice or need another copy, they should immediately contact their provider.

The FCC has ordered VoIP providers to provide E 9-1-1 by later this year; the notice requirement is an interim step. Consumer Advocates believe that the decision requiring E 9-1-1 is critical, but other issues – including the ability to have telephone service during a broadband or power outage – need to be considered by consumers and regulators.