

Help For Those Who Are Hearing Impaired

If you or someone you know is hearing impaired, 3 Rivers is pleased to be able to offer the convenience of having your TTY (text telephone) number listed in our directory.

Your name and TTY number will be included in our directory along with the necessary information the caller will need to place a call to someone who is using the TTY system.

TTY service is available through the Montana Relay, a public service from the state of Montana, which enables standard telephone users to communicate with people who are deaf, hard of hearing or otherwise impaired.

If you would like the TTY number to appear next to your name in the telephone directory, please call Janice at 1-800-796-4567 ext 4011 or email her at janicet@3rivers.coop.

3 RIVERS INFORMATION

Service Information

3 Rivers Communications Divisions

3 Rivers Telephone, Internet and Long Distance

Fairfield: 406.467.2535 or 800.796.4567

Great Falls: 406.216.2535

Conrad: 406.271.2535 Shelby: 406.424.8535

Payments: P.O. Box 489, Fairfield, MT 59436-0489

Correspondence: P.O. Box 429, Fairfield, MT 59436

3 Rivers DBS - Satellite TV/Internet Services

406.467.2535 or 800.796.4567

P.O. Box 159, Fairfield, MT 59436-0159

Website: www.3rivers.net

E-mail: 3rt@3rivers.net

On-line Billing: <https://ebill.3rivers.net>

Board of Trustees

- Darren D. Moser, General Manager, 467.2535
- Harry R. Barnes, Browning, 338.3440
- Russell DeRemer, Big Sky, 995.3656
- William Dringle, Ennis/Harrison, 682.7489
- Brian D. McCollom, Choteau/Pendroy/Dupuyer, Valier, 466.2443
- Keith Good, Carter/Highwood/Great Falls, 734.5371
- Howard Johnson, Brady/Conrad/Power East Conrad/Valier/Shelby, 627.2121
- Michael Johnson, Fairfield/Augusta/Ft. Shaw/Helena, 467.2350
- Mary Hill, Raynesford/Geyser/Neihart/Belt/Stockett, 738.4220
- Loren Tucker, Melrose/Sheridan/Twin Bridges Lima/Virgina City, 843.5566



54th Annual Meeting

On Monday March 19, 2007, 3 Rivers Communications will host its 54th Annual Meeting. This meeting is a great opportunity to reacquaint yourself with friends and neighbors from Big Sky to Browning and to hear the 2006 year end results and what 3 Rivers' plans are for 2007.

The meeting will once again be held at the Fairfield Community Hall. Doors open at 10:30 for member registration with a buffet lunch served from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. The business meeting will begin at 1:00 pm and concludes with the election of four people to the Board of Trustees (one vote per member telephone account). The day will end with several drawings for great door prizes. Be sure to stay for the drawing—you must be present to win!

Plan now to share a great meal and spend a little bit of time with us. The 3 Rivers' board and senior management team will be available to answer your questions. We will have information about all the services we offer including high speed Internet, unlimited long distance and 3RTV—our new TV service that's coming soon.

Here are the answers to some frequently asked questions:

Will capital credit checks be dispersed at the Annual Meeting this year?

- The board has approved a general capital credit retirement of approx. \$1.1 million. The first \$200,000 will be retired pro-rata over all open years, the subsequent balance of approx. \$900,000 will retire in full the member balances for the year 1990 and a very small portion of balances for 1991.

Can someone else pick up my check if I am unable to attend the Annual Meeting?

- In order to protect your privacy, capital credit checks will only be given to the actual member(s) named on the telephone account.

How do businesses or other organizations vote?

- Businesses and organizations that have service with 3 Rivers Telephone Cooperative, Inc., will receive a "Voting Authorization" form in the mail.
- A vote can only be cast if the "Voting Authorization" form is signed and returned to our office no later than March 9, 2007.
- The representative that you designate on this form is the only person that can cast a vote on your behalf.

Will the 3 Rivers business office be open during the Annual Meeting?

- To give our members the opportunity to get to know our friendly staff we will close our Conrad and Shelby offices for the day and our Fairfield office will be closed from 11:00 am until 3:00 pm. ■



Montana homefront

Watch streaming video of
3 Rivers 54th Annual Meeting at
www.3rivers.net

3 RIVERS COMMUNICATIONS NEWSLETTER

MARCH / APRIL 2007

Meet 3 Rivers' Facilities Records Department

HOLY TECHNOLOGY BATMAN!

This may not be the Batcave but it sure looks like it. It's not too farfetched to say the Facilities Records Department is the command center for all that goes on at 3 Rivers. As Mike Henning, Facilities Manager, likes to say, "The FR department is the hub for us; everything that happens to make your phone ring will pass through this department."

"There are 3 'mini' departments within Facilities Records," explained Yvonn Schmitt, department supervisor. "We are responsible for the trouble desk, which handles all calls from individual phone problems to area outages. We also have programmers who enter data into our system ensuring that you receive a dial tone and have the calling features you want. Finally, we assign and track all the equipment that provides you service." After ten years at 3 Rivers, six of them in the records department, Yvonn laughingly remarked that, "you better like change to be in this job." She has seen the department grow from 5 employees to 13 because of all the changes demanded by new technology and the substantial growth 3 Rivers has experienced over the years.

HOLY PROBLEM SOLVING BATMAN!

Working at the trouble desk means the majority of your customer contact consists of people upset because their phone isn't working properly, although there are also some lighter moments. Shawn, Trouble Desk Dispatcher, remembered one such call. "A customer called and told me, 'you know I had you guys come out and locate my lines, and you are



3 Rivers Communications' Facilities Records Department

good... they are right where you said they were. And sure enough I hit 'em'." Shawn added, "The moral of the story: the marking paint is NOT a bull's eye!" He went on to add, "We are the first person most customers talk to when they have a problem and if we can assess the trouble correctly it saves time for everyone, and every so often we can even solve the problem on the first call."

Shawn is nice enough to pass on this trouble desk tip. He calls it a line reset, and says if you're having phone trouble try unplugging every phone in your house from the jack, leave them that way for five to ten minutes, then plug them back in and see if they work. He estimates that this helps 30-40 percent of the time. Having spent 16 years as a field engineer, he had never seen anything like this and wouldn't have believed it if he hadn't had such success with it.

Continued inside on page 2...

Upcoming Events

Do you have an event you would like to include in the 3 Rivers Upcoming Events column?

The event must be a community sponsored event and be open to all community members. Space permitting we will run the name of your event, the date, time and location.

If you have questions or event information please contact: susan.wilson@3rivers.coop

3 Rivers will be at:

Fort Shaw School Visit	March 6
Annual Meeting	March 19
Fairfield	
Shelby School Visit	March 23
Home and Garden Show	March 30, 31, April 1
Great Falls	
Ennis School Visit	April 16, 17
Madison River Music Festival	April 27, 28
Ennis	

Come see us!

...continued from front "Meet 3 Rivers Facilities Records Dept"

If the problem with your phone isn't solved by the trouble desk a technician will become involved to locate the difficulty. One of the first places a tech will look is at the data base that the programmers compile and update.

HOLY INFORMATION BATMAN!

Kim is a Program Specialist for 3 Rivers. She is responsible for entering information from the initial service order to provision you with dial tone all the way to coordinating with other departments to determine if your line has High Speed Internet capability. An important part of her job is to make sure that all the information we have on your phone line is accurate. The data base that she works with holds all your specific information, from the cable pair that runs from our central office to your house to the line equipment that your phone connection rides on, all the way to the switch that connects you to the outside world. Needless to say, when asked what the most important part of her job is Kim answered, "Accuracy!" Kim spends her day working between several different data bases to coordinate all this information. She mentioned that not long ago 3 Rivers used perhaps five different types of equipment to transmit a voice signal or Internet data and now it's up to ten.

With advances that 3 Rivers is making into wireless and fiber optic communications the Facilities Records department is getting even more types of equipment to track and coordinate. Kim says, "It's a whole new ballgame. We've never worked with this equipment before and it's a challenge; but in this job nothing stays the same, something is always changing." She continued, "But that's the best part of my job."

HOLY CONFUSION BATMAN!

The third responsibility of the Facilities Records department is the assignment of equipment. This may sound simple but when you realize that 3 Rivers has 29 exchanges and over 22,000 access lines you can start to comprehend the complexities of coordinating cable pairs to line equipment to switches all tied to a physical address and one or more phone numbers, many of which have additional call features or even a multi-line

business phone system.

After talking to Tom, an Assignor, you begin to understand the importance of the Facilities Records department. He stated that "for any kind of trouble on your line we must know what type of equipment is providing phone service to you, for every new connect we must know what type of equipment is in the area and will be servicing your phone and as we look towards implementing new technology in the future we need to know what type of equipment is already in place." As Mike Henning remarked, "we live and die by the accuracy of our records, it's almost like a medical chart for your phone service."

Another example of the importance of updating and maintaining our records was mentioned by Yvonn. "If we don't have the right physical address for you when you use your phone in an emergency to call for help, emergency personnel may spend extra time trying to find you." She pointed out that this is especially true for rural addresses. "With so many counties adding E911 services and revising their street addresses, we may have an old physical address for a phone number and no one knows until something happens." She went on to add, "Please contact us if your rural address has been changed so we can update our records."

HOLY PROGRESS BATMAN!

"When you think back 15 years ago, all this information we've been talking about was recorded by hand into ledgers," commented Henning. "If there was a problem or an outage the local serviceman would pull the book and start looking." Now when information is needed a technician has all the specifics at his fingertips via computer. This is what the Facilities Records department is all about. ■

Montana Homefront Contributors Acknowledgment
We'd like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals who contributed to Montana Homefront this issue:
Callie Moss, Susan Wilson, Don Serido, Kathy Jones

NEW EMPLOYEES



Phil
Great Falls Sales



Cameron
Engineering

REGULATORY

Federal Excise Tax Refund Information

In previous newsletters, 3 Rivers passed along information that the federal government repealed a 3% excise tax on long distance charges and will refund the portion of the tax applied to long-distance charges from February 28, 2003 until August 1, 2006. Residential users were told they can claim a "standard amount" based on the number of exemptions they claim on their 2006 tax returns (\$30, \$40, \$50 or \$60 depending on exemptions).

For businesses and tax-exempt organizations, the IRS has developed a formula in which eligible taxpayers need only review their phone bills for 2 months, instead of all 41 months included in the refund period. In addition, eligible taxpayers need to know their total telephone expenses for the 41-month period and the number of employees reported on their federal withholding tax return for the second quarter of 2006. This formula is an alternative to basing a refund request on the actual amount of tax paid. Contact your tax advisor for details.

All taxpayers, residential and business, have the option of requesting a refund using the actual amount of tax paid. If copies of past bills are needed, 3 Rivers can provide them for a \$5 service charge plus \$1 per page.

The Federal Excise Tax collected by 3 Rivers was passed on to the federal government and federal law requires that refunds be issued only by the IRS. More information is available online at www.irs.gov. ■

We May Have Money For You!

As a member/owner of 3 Rivers Telephone Cooperative you have a financial interest in the cooperative. Each time you use our telephone service you are investing in the cooperative and at the discretion of the Board of Trustees a portion of your investment is returned to you annually in the form of Capital Credits.

Many of you receive a Capital Credit check from us in March or April. If you have not received a check in recent years it may be due to one of the following reasons:

- the 3 Rivers Board may have decided not to do a general retirement of Capital Credits for the year;
- you may not have had service with us during the time period which the retirement of Capital Credits covers;
- the person named on the account may be deceased and we don't know to whom the Capital Credits should go;
- you may have moved and we do not have a current address for you.

At this time we do not have a correct address for the following people who have a Capital Credit check waiting for them.

- Barore, Jesse or Brittanie
- Deroche, Brian
- Dorton, Barry
- Gillis, AJ or Molly
- Kemp, Richard
- Kummer, Malia
- Le Compte, William or Sherri
- McGowan, Jonathan
- Miller, Ellen
- Morrow, Debrah L
- Napier, Stuart or Leona
- Nasseth, Jarrod
- Nicol, Ronald or Linda
- Parks, Robert or Vicki
- Rothschiller, Dawn
- Ruff, Lisa
- Running Crane, Joannette
- Souders, Michael
- Thomas, Leland
- Thomas, Sheila
- Waldrup, Jeffrey or Alicia
- Wetzel, Scott
- Wilson, Barbara
- Witt, Jodi
- Wolf Tail, Joanne

If you are one of these people or you know someone on this list please contact us so we can verify the information and mail a check. For more info call Kathy at 1-800-796-4567 ext 4012. ■

Message Center
Voice Mail



Message Center
This service doesn't require a separate piece of equipment and answers incoming calls even if you're on the line. It allows you to provide a pre-recorded greeting and has a message indicator light (if phone is equipped and line allows). Only \$5 per month!

Message Center Premium
Includes everything in basic Message Center plus e-mail notification, custom greetings, holiday greetings and more for just \$6.95 per month!

Free month credit will be applied to your next phone bill. Some Message Center Premium features are sold separately. Call a 3 Rivers customer service representative or visit www.3rivers.net for more details

SPECIAL SERVICES - LOW INCOME ASSISTANCE

Getting Connected May Be a Phone Call Away

Few can argue that having a telephone is considered one of life's necessities, yet not everyone has the ability to pay for this staple of modern American life. So what is being done to make telephone service more accessible to low-income consumers?

The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Universal Service Fund includes a Low-Income Program that provides discounts on telephone installation and monthly telephone service to qualifying consumers. Link-Up America and the Lifeline Assistance Program are the two components of this program. Here's what each provides:

Link-Up America: Help for qualified low-income consumers to connect (or hook up) to the telephone network by offsetting one-half of the initial hookup fee, up to a set dollar amount for qualified households.

Lifeline Assistance Program: Discounts on basic monthly service for qualified subscribers.

In order to participate a person must qualify for Medicaid. Additionally, consumers living on tribal lands may qualify for further discounts if they receive Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a Head Start (income-qualifying standard) subsidy, or participate in the National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program.

According to the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, Link-Up America



and the Lifeline Assistance Program ensure that everyone in this country has affordable telephone service — a vital link to 911, the way we look for jobs and how we stay in touch with our families and friends.

If you are a low-income consumer, getting connected may be a phone call away. For more information or to obtain a form contact your local Public Assistance office, call 3 Rivers Communications at 1.800.796.4567 or visit our web site at www.3rivers.net and click on local telephone/support/consumer tips/low income assistance. You can also contact the FCC's Consumer Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322)-voice, 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322)-TTY, write the FCC at 445 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20554, or check their Web site at www.fcc.gov for more information. ■