



Control Number: 50664



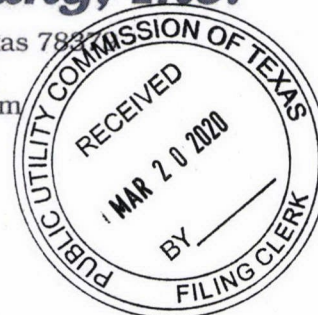
Item Number: 29

Addendum StartPage: 0



Riviera Telephone Company, Inc.

103 S. 8th Street • P.O. Box 997 • Riviera, Texas 78277
361-296-3232 • Fax # 361-296-3125
E-Mail: rtc@rivnet.com • www.rivnet.com



March 20, 2020

Public Utility Commission of Texas ("Commission")
1701 N. Congress Ave.
Austin, Texas 78701

RE: Project No. 50664, *Issues Related to the State of Disaster for Coronavirus Disease 2019*;
Project No. 37277, *Project for Submitting Emergency Operations Plan and Notifications of Emergency Operations Exercises*

Riviera Telephone Company, Inc. (RTC) and Gulf Coast Broadband (GCB, our wireless ISP) stands by the residents of Texas and its customers during this difficult time. We extend our deepest sympathies to those impacted by the COVID-19, and our gratitude to the health care workers and officials from across the state who are working diligently to help our fellow Texans.

We recognize that it is more important now than ever for Texans to stay connected. During these trying times, high quality telecommunications services are allowing people all across the state to work from home, use remote or distance learning, engage in online commerce to obtain the supplies they need, and perhaps most importantly given the nature of this crisis access telemedicine resources. Appropriate social distancing would not be possible for many Texans without such connectivity. Connectivity challenges are felt especially sharply in high-cost areas such as RTC's rural territory. Because RTC has invested in infrastructure in this area for decades, we are able to provide needed telecommunications services to individual customers, businesses, schools and law enforcement, and other crucial services across our territory for the duration of this crisis.

During this time of great need, RTC has implemented the following voluntary measures to assist customers impacted by COVID-19:

- We have informed Shawn Hazard, Emergency Management Coordinator, of RTC's initial action, its Emergency Operations Plan ("EOP") and the pandemic section thereof, and past pandemic drills.
- RTC is operating under its EOP Level 1. A copy of this letter is being filed in Project No. 37277, and reports of updates on the status of operations, outages or restoration efforts, if any, will also be filed in Project No. 37277 consistent with 16 TAC § 26.51. Any outages will also be reported to outages@puc.texas.gov and in Project No. 37275.
- We have signed onto the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") Keep Americans Connected Pledge.
 - o We are not disconnecting the services of any customers who let us know they are unable to pay because of COVID-19.
 - o No late payment charges will be assessed while the state disaster declaration is in place.
 - o Early cancellation penalties are waived during this disaster.
 - o We will make every effort to accommodate deferred payment plans and flexible payment arrangements for customers who let us know they are impacted by COVID-19.

- The situation is fluid and RTC will continue monitoring the Commission, the FCC, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and other relevant agencies for guidelines and best practices to keep our employees and customers safe. We are keeping in touch with local officials and leaders as well.
- We launched "Connect our Students" initiative to provide internet service to all students in our service areas without charging them installation charges or monthly recurring charges during the time that we are dealing with COVID-19.

Additionally RTC continues to provide updates to its employees and has advised them to stay informed on COVID-19 by accessing reliable sources such as the CDC website.

We recognize the important role that RTC and other rural telecommunications providers have during this ongoing public health emergency, and we are taking our service responsibilities very seriously for the duration of this disaster. We will keep the Commission informed of any additional material commitments regarding COVID-19 in this project and/or through Mr. Hazard as may be directed.

To the extent it may be necessary, RTC respectfully requests Commission action related to the suspension of rules requiring tariff pre-approval to waive installation charges or offer promotions to assist customers during this outbreak.

Should the Commission or any customers have questions or concerns, we remain available at 877-296-3232 or email at rtc@rivnet.com.

Sincerely,



Billy Colston, III
General Manager/Vice President

Docket 3
50664
37277

From: [Bill Colston III](#)
To: Shawn.Hazard@puc.texas.gov
Cc: [RTC](#)
Subject: Riviera Telephone Company
Date: Monday, March 16, 2020 2:37:14 PM

Mr. Hazard,

At the request of Texas Telephone Association staff, we have been asked to keep you informed of any action we, as a company, have taken in response to the recent COVID-19 outbreak.

As of today, Riviera Telephone Co., Inc (as well as Gulf Coast Broadband, our wireless ISP), which operate predominately in Kleberg, Kenedy counties, with a limited presence in Brooks County, have signed on to the FCC Keep America Connected Pledge.

We have also been asked to inform you of any further steps we are currently taking in light of this event. I have been in contact with our locally served school districts (Riviera ISD, Kenedy County-Wide Common School District and Ricardo ISD) and have committed to provide service to any students that are not currently with an internet connection at their residence with no-charge installation and no charge internet access during their time away from school, upon verification of their enrollment in a public school.

Please advise of any further instruction from the PUC.

Regards,

Billy Colston, III
General Manager
Riviera Telephone Co., Inc.
(361) 296-3232
P.O. Box 997
Riviera, TX 78379
bill.colston.3@rivnet.com

Dockets 50664
37277

From: [Michael Carowitz](#)
To: [Bill Colston III](#)
Cc: [RTC](#)
Subject: RE: Keep America Connected Pledge
Date: Monday, March 16, 2020 2:32:42 PM

Thanks for taking the Pledge! You're free to post the information as you see fit. We'll include your company's name in one of our forthcoming announcements (you just missed the deadline for today's press release). Again, thank you stepping up.

From: Bill Colston III <bill.colston.3@rivnet.com>
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2020 3:23 PM
To: Michael Carowitz <Michael.Carowitz@fcc.gov>
Cc: RTC <rtc@rivnet.com>
Subject: Keep America Connected Pledge

Mr. Carowitz,

I am writing following a forwarded message from Briseida Mendoza, our Office Manager at Riviera Telephone Co., Inc.
As per your instruction, our businesses (Riviera Telephone Co., Inc. and Gulf Coast Broadband) would like to enter the Keep America Connected Pledge.
We do have a few housekeeping questions.
Where and how are we required to post this information for our customers' consumption? Corporate website? Bill inserts?
Will FCC update pledging companies as situation develops?
While I understand you are incredibly busy, any guidance would be greatly appreciated.

Regards,

Billy Colston, III
General Manager
Riviera Telephone Co., Inc.
(361) 296-3232
P.O. Box 997
Riviera, TX 78379
bill.colston.3@rivnet.com

For immediate release:

50664
37277

Operation Connect our Students

Riviera Telephone Co., Inc. and Gulf Coast Broadband would like to announce our **Connect our Students** program. In light of the recent COVID-19 outbreak in our country, our educational institutions have been forced to adjust their delivery method to continue their students' education. As such, our public schools are actively working on a solution to convert curriculum to a distance-learning based platform.

As such, Riviera Telephone Co., Inc. and Gulf Coast Broadband have decided that as of Friday, March 13, 2020, any students in our service area will be offered internet connection at no charge during this time that campuses are closed. There will be no installation charges, nor monthly recurring service charges throughout the duration of these campus closures. This will be available in both Riviera Telephone Co., Inc. as well as Gulf Coast Broadband service areas.

Students will need to obtain verification of enrollment from their respective schools. Understanding that schools are currently closed, and VOE may be difficult to obtain, we are working directly with local school districts to accomplish this requirement.

Contact Riviera Telephone Co., Inc at (361) 296-3232 or via email: rtc.ofc@rivnet.com

- Riviera
- Loyola Beach
- Riviera Beach
- Sarita
- Armstrong

Contact Gulf Coast Broadband at (361) 296-9434 or via email: gcb.ofc@rivnet.com

- Ricardo
- Kingsville (in limited areas)

In light of the requirement to maintain "social distancing" parameters, please confine as much contact with our business office to email and phone contact.

Thank you for your continued support.

Respectfully,

Billy Colston, III
General Manager

Released 3/18/2020

50664
37277

For immediate release:

Please know that our team at RTC and GCB are working as hard and fast as we can to address your service requests. Staff are actively working to get information from customers as efficiently as we can. Please know that our office is open, and if your call is not answered, we will get back with you as soon as a member of our team is available.

To expedite this process, please have your service address available in an effort to help us better locate where service will be established.

We are working with local school districts to verify enrollment, but if you have independently obtained this information, please provide it to the Customer Service Representative when you call.

Finally, our Technicians are working as quickly as they can to schedule site surveys and installation crews. We are all learning what we can about containment and mitigation of this virus. As this is a moving target, we are developing procedures to help us prevent cross-contamination from being introduced into your residence. To that end, please expect our technicians to actively employ disinfection countermeasures while in your home (household cleaning products are currently our method of disinfection, and will be used on anything we touch, in an effort to prevent transfer in to your home.)

Thank you,

Billy Colston, III
General Manager
Update: 3/18/2020 3:15 pm