

NEWSLETTER NOV-DEC 2008

IMPORTANT ISSUES – ATSI, RATES, SURVEYS, SCHEDULES, and more

ATSI MAKES HEADLINES IN D.c....FCC has fate of telephone use and costs in its hands.....ATSI, through its members, spearheads information campaign on behalf of every telephone user in the United States....progress IS BEING MADE! We need permission to send a letter. Please read.

The Association of Tele-Services International has been working on Capitol Hill for nearly two years making the point that a per telephone number charge to the Universal Service Fund fee would be harmful to every American telephone user.

Changes being proposed will result in millions (or billions) of dollars being collected through increases to the Federal Universal Service Fund. The generated funds would be the result of a \$1.00 to \$3.00 fee (notice the word is fee not tax) added to every telephone number allocated to a business or residence.

This should not be a surprise. FUSF fees are already on your phone bill. Look at a copy and you will see several fees are collected but have no bearing on the services provided by your phone carrier. The FUSF fees clearly show on every telephone bill.

The current plan is to add \$1.00 to \$3.00 to every telephone number held by a company or residence. If the plan is implemented, every telephone vendor in the country will be mandated to collect the money and pay it to the federal government. Millions, possibly billions, of dollars will be collected as a result. How much will that increase your telephone bill? If you have one telephone number, it could be \$1.00 or it could be as much as \$3.00 per month. You say, “Oh well, that’s not much.” BUT LET’S TALK ABOUT IT!

Let's use a hospital as an example. In the case of a hospital with telephones in 300 patient rooms, each having its own telephone number, the fee could range from \$300 monthly (at \$1.00 per number) to \$900 monthly (at \$3.00 per number) on the patient room telephones, resulting in an annual cost increase anywhere from \$3,600 to \$10,800 plus fees on every other telephone number in that facility.

That money will not stay with the hospital. It will be collected and paid to the government via the telephone vendor.

In our case at \$3.00 per number, it would be an expense increase of close to \$40,000 annually. Remember that cost has nothing to do with the services provided by ABA. We will have to add fees, collect and pay it.

If you have concern for such an increase in these fees (they are already on your bill but not at the increased rate), please give us permission to send a letter to your Congressman or Senator on your behalf. Please e-mail CETaba@aol.com Or fax 410 879 4465 names of your Congressional leaders. We will send the letter. This is important and we encourage your participation.

THE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY is rapidly approaching. A fax has been sent requesting holiday information. Thanks if you have replied. If you have not replied, please do so by the 18th. Thanks so much.

NO BASE RATE INCREASE – We review rates twice annually. Operating costs are up, health care rates zoomed, energy fees staggering! *However, we are holding the line and not raising base rates on standard answering service accounts. HOW?*

We reviewed every client profile and discovered that some clients get more service attention than others. We were not charging extra for that special attention. Allow me to explain. If you are a standard answering service account with a message slip requiring up to 5 fields of information (caller's name, area code/telephone number, address, caller's company name, and message), your base rate will not change at this time and the additional incoming and outgoing call rates will stay the same.

If your account requires 6 to 8 fields of information, additional incoming calls over the base allowance will be 85 cents. If the message requires over 8 fields of information, the additional incoming calls will increase to \$1.00. Time billing rates do not change.

ITS ATSI AWARD OF EXCELLENCE TIME – ABA was awarded the coveted ATSI Award of Excellence (our 3rd consecutive year) at the 2008 International Conference in St. Louis. ABA is enrolled in the 2008-2009 program.

SURVEYS – Our annual survey was issued earlier this month. Nearly one-third have been completed and returned to our operations manager. Each reply is carefully read. Suggestions are taken seriously. Replies are reviewed by administration and operations.

Every frontline tele-receptionist sees every client reply. We are proud to announce that the replies are overwhelmingly favorable. Steps are being taken to resolve individual client changes, concerns and account design. If you have not replied, please do.

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SCHEDULES – On-call schedules are due in our office no later than the 29th of the month. Just a friendly reminder! Schedules not received by the 29th require our staff to make reminder phone calls. In 2005, we published a notice in our newsletter that \$10.00 would be charged whenever we had to make schedule request calls. We really never carried out that notice.

However, any on-call schedule not arriving at ABA either via fax, e-mail or U.S. mail by the 29th of the month will require a phone call to the client office and there will be a \$10.00 charge. If the schedule is not received by the 1st of the following month, additional attempts will be made to obtain the schedule. An additional \$15.00 will be added to the account. When the 1st falls on a weekend, the schedule must be received no later than noon on the previous Friday.

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LINK TO OUR WEBSITE – We are linking customers to our website. If you would like to link to our website, please call Cathy at 410 879 8600.

****** EXPLANATION OF OUR BILLING POLICY ******

There have been a number of questions about our billing policy. We hope this explanation is helpful.

DISCOUNT FOR PROMPT PAYMENT – We continue to honor a 1% discount when payment is received in our office by the 10th of the month. The discount is given on the answering service charges. Maryland Sales Tax must be paid in its entirety and is not subject to the discount. See more on page 4.

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FINANCE CHARGE- There is a 2% charge if account has a balance over 30 days. In order to avoid the 2% fee, checks must be received by the 29th day of the month in which the statement was sent. In addition, a LATE FEE of \$25.00 will be added if account is not paid by the last day of the month.

ACCOUNT SUSPENSION – An account unpaid for forty-five (45) days will be suspended. A re-activation fee of \$50.00 for Answering Service and \$25.00 for Voicemail must be paid in addition to the amount due on the account before service restoration. This provision is included on our application,

CREDIT CARD PAYMENT - Allow us to process your invoice monthly to guarantee the 1% discount and save postage. Immediately upon processing the credit card, we will attach a paid receipt to the ABA invoice and send it to you.

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CUSTOMER UPDATES – Effective February 2009, ABA update mailings will be February and August. When you receive the update request, please take a few minutes to review, make additions or deletions and return the copy to Cathy. *NO CHANGE* - please write “*NO CHANGES*” on the copy and return to Cathy. We want to keep our account information up-to-date and provide this service at *no charge*. However, we have added an “Administrative Fee” when changes are excessive at other times of the year.

ADMINISTRATIVE FEE – When a slight name or telephone number change is required to a client’s account, Cathy or Divina rapidly make the change without any charge to the account. However, there are times throughout the year when excessive changes require more than fifteen (15) minutes. It takes time to make the change in the system, print the new account sheets, send notes to all operators about the changes and fax or mail the new copy to the client’s office. There is no charge for less than fifteen (15) minutes. When the work time exceeds fifteen (15) minutes, there is a \$15.00 charge. Each additional fifteen (15) minutes is \$15.00.

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TRIVIA QUESTION – **How many Beatles were there? Name them. Fax or e-mail your reply to 410 879 4465 or CETaba@aol.com. The first three clients answering correctly will receive \$25.00 credit on December’s invoice.**

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HAPPY THANKSGIVING

