

# Supreme Court okays 87% RCA rate hike

BY MARGIE BAUMAN

Placing a phone call today from Ketchikan to Nome, Bethel to Barrow, Kodiak to King Cove, or Juneau to Sitka?

Better check your long distance operator and your wallet first. The rates went up 87 percent Friday, as the Alaska Supreme Court approved an interim rate hike to RCA Alaska Communications for all in-state long distance telephone calls.

The decision went into effect immediately, for telephones, tel-exes, message phones, telegram services and other communications devices.

In some cases, this may mean it's cheaper to call New York from Alaska than Juneau.

For example, the evening rate from Fairbanks to Juneau is now \$1.90 for the first three minutes, while for the same three minutes you can call New York for \$1.67.

That weekday business hour call from Anchorage to Fairbanks that used to cost you \$.90 will now cost you \$1.70 and the weekday, day rate call from Nome to Anchorage that used to cost \$1.35 will cost \$2.45 now.

RCA Alaska Communications

had been requesting the interim rate hike for nearly a year, over the vehement protests of the State of Alaska, the federal government, rural users and consumer groups. Village residents particularly have expressed opposition to the increase, citing RCA's lengthy delays in installing bush satellite phones, its average of only 70 percent installed bush phones in working order at any time, and the general unreliability or poor quality of service. On the other hand, RCA maintains that the company is losing about \$50,000 a day on phone calls within the state. However, the company

acknowledges profits of \$18 million in 1977.

## First Denied

The Alaska Public Utilities Commission (APUC) had initially denied RCA's request, but RCA appealed that decision and won in Anchorage Superior Court. Then the state appealed to the Supreme Court, but lost, when the decision came down Friday.

The APUC is still considering another RCA request, for a permanent rate hike of 95 percent. That decision is not expected

for several months.

The state, meanwhile, figures that interim rate hike will cost the Alaska government \$1.6 million, while Alaska consumers as a group will pay \$18.5 million more under those new rates.

Interstate rates were not affected by the Supreme Court decision.

## Best Bets

For telephone users interested in getting the lowest rates: if you have a choice, remember that day rates are the highest,

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# ● **RCA rates**

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evening rates are moderate and night rates still the lowest. Hours when they are in effect do vary slightly, depending on whether you are placing a call within Alaska or out-of-state.

**Day rates:** for calls within Alaska, day rates apply from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. For calls out-of-state, the day rates apply from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Evening rates:** for calls within Alaska, evening rates apply from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays. For calls out-of-state, evening rates apply from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. weekdays and from

5 p.m. to 11 p.m. Sundays.

**Night rates:** for calls within Alaska, night rates apply from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. weekdays and all weekend, from 7 p.m. Friday until 7 a.m. Monday. For calls out-of-state, the night rate is in effect from 11 p.m. to 8 a.m. weekdays and Sundays and also all day Saturday until 5 p.m. Sunday.

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