

# Some cell phone complaints go unanswered

BY CHRIS BONING  
Assistant News Editor

Senior Emily Eschbacher has run out of options.

Problems with phone company AT&T have left her without a usable cell phone for the rest of her time at the University, but help might be on the way for her and other students frustrated with AT&T's recent acquisition of a local phone network.

Eschbacher said she and her family initially signed up with AT&T in February 2007. She specifically asked the company whether or not she could receive service in Kirksville, and AT&T told her yes, she said.

The problems began in August when she received a letter from the company notifying her that more than half of her calls were being made outside of the coverage area and that she was being kicked off her plan, Eschbacher said.

"I was really angry and confused as to why just months later after signing the contract, they [would say], 'Well we don't provide service in that area,'" she said. "Why didn't somebody warn me?"

She said the company gave her the choice of either no longer using the phone in Kirksville or switching to another provider.

Eschbacher said she and her father called and spoke to company representatives about five times before finally agreeing at the end of September to have her phone put on a roam restriction. She had perfect reception in the area until mid-January, she said. She called the company once more, and representatives told her they've never had service in Kirksville. The company also told Eschbacher that she still is under contract to pay the service fee even if she is unable to use her phone.

"I just need three more months because then I'll go back to [the] St. Louis area and that's where ... AT&T is, and [it's] what my family uses," she said. "It's free mobile-to-mobile. It's just what I want to do."

Eschbacher said that because she is an apartment manager she doesn't receive



Last year the University entered into a contract with a company affiliated with Cingular Wireless to install a portable cell phone tower near the Truman State University Press Building. The tower can be collapsed and removed at any time. Truman gets \$700 per month to rent space for the cell phone tower.

Beth Rolf/Index

compensation in cash form so she can't pay for a new plan herself. Her family can't afford to switch plans, either, she said.

"It just is really inconvenient, and I'm frustrated," she said.

Eschbacher said that before choosing AT&T, she looked at plans with other companies that have good reception in Kirksville, but not in her hometown of Sullivan, Mo.

"I felt like I was trapped," she said of having to choose between getting service in Kirksville or at home.

Eschbacher said she has talked to other students who have experienced problems with AT&T, although none of them have experienced them to the extent that she has.

"Since when does a business tell you [to] go to the competitor [because] we don't want you anymore?" she said.

She also said the company told her it is systematically eliminating people from its service plans via audits. AT&T no longer is carrying the cost of picking up signals from other companies' towers, Eschbacher said.

"I see those commercials on television where it's ... 'AT&T: your world - more bars, more places,' and I just want to throw something at the television," she said. "It's not true. I feel like it's false advertising."

## A Temporary Solution

Dave Rector, executive director of institutional research and budgets, said a company affiliated with Cingular Wireless - since purchased by AT&T - approached the University more than a year ago about renting space for a portable cell phone tower on school property. At the moment, the tower is on the south end of campus near the Truman State University Press building.

"What they do is they come in, [put down] a concrete slab, pour it, put up a fence around it," he said. "They bring this thing in on a trailer and just pop it up."

Rector said the school initially had a year-long contract with the company that since has expired. He said the contract now is on a month-to-month basis.

"We could tell them to take it away on one month's notice," he said. "They can tell us we don't need this anymore."

The school receives \$700 a month for renting space to the company.

"It's not a lot of money, but it's \$8,400 we wouldn't get otherwise," he said, adding that the revenue from the tower goes into the University's general fund.

Rector said the company chose a portable tower because it didn't have enough traffic in the area to justify

building a permanent one.

"We haven't heard from them since [they installed it]," he said. "All I know is that I get a check every month."

One of the company's requirements for installing the tower was access to electricity and the phone network, Rector said. Likewise, he said one of the University's requirements was that the company leave the property in good shape after it no longer needs the space.

"It might be there a year from now, it might go away," he said. "Maybe they've forgotten about it, but they're paying us."

## Help on the Horizon

Nancy Garvey, vice president-general manager for the Missouri-Kansas market for AT&T Mobility, said the company installed the cellular on wheels, or COW, to monitor traffic in the area and so customers wouldn't have to go through a roaming network.

Garvey said AT&T bought the assets to the local roaming network in December, so the University's COW has been deactivated. The tower soon will be taken down and brought to the St. Louis area, she added. She also said service should improve now that the company has its own network in the Kirksville area.

Prior to acquiring to the roaming network's assets, AT&T had been unable to sell in the area, Garvey said.

"We haven't had stores in the Kirksville area," she said. "If someone had gone to AT&T.com and tried to purchase a phone with a Kirksville ZIP code, they wouldn't have been able to do that because we only sell in areas where we own the network."

Garvey said the company has received few complaints about coverage in the area. This is probably because of the fact that, until recently, there was no local network, so there are few AT&T users who bought their phones in Kirksville.

The company did have a program in which it reviewed customers' off-network phone usage, but AT&T ended the program shortly before acquiring the roaming network.

Garvey said the company will open a store in Kirksville by the end of February.

# Local wire rope factory achieves distinction

BY RENEÉ CELLA  
Staff Reporter

Because of the hard work of its employees, the WireCo WorldGroup factory in Kirksville recently earned a special certification that makes it one of the leaders in the wire rope industry.

WireCo is an international producer of wire rope based in Kansas City, Mo., that has other U.S. plants, as well as factories in Canada, Mexico,

Germany and China, said material manager John Harris. At its Kirksville location, employees attach ends to wire ropes for fire and utility trucks for local companies - wire ropes, which fray easily, must be capped in Missouri. Three weeks ago, the Kirksville plant earned the AS-9100 certification, meaning that it now can expand its activity, including providing wire rope for the aerospace industry.

"We can now do additional work for the government that we

could never do in the past," Harris said.

Kirksville's WireCo went through an extensive, two-year process, including paperwork, inspections from government officials and interviews from staff and management to ensure proper standards are met.

There are seven criteria for earning AS-9100 certification, several of which involve quality control, according to www.siliconfareast.com. WireCo is only the second wire rope manufac-

turer to have achieved this distinction.

"The AS-9100 certification allows a business to sell within the aerospace field," said Scott Burkholder, a consultant from PRI, a leading company in aerospace registration that provides AS-9100 certification services. "Many aerospace companies require that a business have this certification before doing any type of business with them. It isn't impossible to do business in this field

without the AS-9100, but it is very difficult."

Phil Tate, director of job creation for Kirksville Regional Economic Development Inc., said this recent certification may have a positive effect on the rest of the Kirksville community.

"Anything that helps WireCo is beneficial to the community," he said. "Anything that makes them more efficient is not a direct benefit as far as job construction, but any time a business can improve their company,

the results can only be positive for them and the community."

Mark Leek, Kirksville WireCo plant manager, said the company already has done some additional hiring and plans on hiring a few more employees later in the year to help deal with an increase in incoming orders.

"I am very proud of the staff here at WireCo," Leek said. "The company has been trying to achieve the AS-9100 status since 2005, and I am very pleased that we have finally received it."

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### For Rent

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### For Rent

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