

OPASTCO: Who We Are

The Organization for the Protection and Advancement of Small Telephone Companies, OPASTCO, is a national trade association dedicated to educating, representing, and serving the small independently owned and operated telephone companies and cooperatives of rural America.

Small independents emerged in predominantly rural areas that the Bell telephone companies and the larger independents didn't serve. The companies were founded on the belief that everyone is entitled to phone service, regardless of where he or she lives.

Twenty-five years ago, nineteen of these small independent telephone companies, committed to providing universal service, joined together in an effort to preserve the future of independent telephony. They believed their continued existence depended upon the rapid dissemination of information about the ever-changing telecommunications industry and fair representation of their specific concerns before regulatory, legislative, and industry bodies. Thus, OPASTCO was formed.



Mary Ann Kilber Arnold, E. Kilber Telephone Company, leads a meeting of the Membership Committee in Palm Springs.

OPASTCO member companies each serve less than 50,000 access lines, and most are located in small communities. Many of the commercial telephone companies are family owned businesses, while the cooperatives are owned by telephone subscribers in the community. The close relationship between OPASTCO members and their subscribers enhances their commitment to universal service.

The original OPASTCO members built their association around a spirit of cooperation and unity among the members, and that spirit continues to fill OPASTCO members today. Although OPASTCO maintains a small staff in Washington, DC, it is run by its members through an 18-member board of directors which bases decisions on the recommendations of various active committees of members.

Our Members

All independent telephone systems, both commercial companies and cooperatives, serving less than 50,000 access lines are eligible for membership in OPASTCO. Membership is open to telephone companies in Canada as well as the United States. Many of OPASTCO's more than 360 members receive financing from the Rural Electrification Administration and the Rural Telephone Bank.

INSURANCE TRUST

Paula Ellen, Chair
Yukon Valley Telephone Company, Inc.
 Allen Arvig
Yukon Valley / Len Telephone
 Bob Bouldin
Elkhart Telephone Company
 Raymond Heragan
Genesee Communications Corp.
 Glenn Raab
Metamora Telephone Company
 Richard Scarino
OPASTCO Controller



Allen Arvig of the Insurance Trust and board member Larry Slattery chat during their visit to Pond Branch Telephone Company, Gilbert, South Carolina.

The average OPASTCO member telephone company serves approximately 3,600 access lines, and together members serve more than 1 million access lines in 39 states and Canada. The smallest company in the OPASTCO framework is The Island Telephone Company, which serves 34 access lines, while North West Telephone Company is the largest building block in the structure of OPASTCO, serving 51,500 access lines.

OPASTCO also includes nearly 100 associate members, entities which provide telecommunications products and services to independent telephone systems. Representatives of associate members cannot vote or sit on the OPASTCO board, but they are welcome to serve on OPASTCO committees.

During 1988, OPASTCO added 54 telephone companies and 52 associates to its membership, continuing to build toward a strong future for independents.

Expanding Our Services

There are numerous benefits available through membership in OPASTCO:

- a comprehensive schedule of educational programs.
- a group of 360 other small telephone companies and cooperatives sharing common concerns and new ideas.
- strong representation before Congress, the Federal Communications Commission, the courts, the Rural Electrification Administration, the National Exchange Carrier Association, and other decision-making bodies.
- an array of informative publications covering the telecommunications industry from the small company perspective.
- group health, dental, and life insurance plans.
- a staff of professionals in Washington, DC, representing the interests of small companies and responding to the needs of the association's members.

During 1988, the OPASTCO board officially accepted Canadian independent telephone companies as full voting members of OPASTCO, and Canadian companies began to join the association.

DUES STRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Margaret Goatcher, Chair
Garrison Telephone Company
 Bob Bouldin
Elkhart Telephone Company
 Glenn Ramsey
Tulada Telephone Company
 Joe Crimes
OPASTCO Director of Membership Services