



States Hope to Reap Rewards from Wireless Contract

By **Wayne Rash** | Posted 2007-01-03

The Western States Contracting Alliance has put into place a wireless purchasing contract designed to save money for states and localities across the United States.

In a new contract that went into effect Jan. 1, WSCA has developed a contracting vehicle that can be used by states, cities, counties and other municipal entities to get favorable rates on wireless phones, data devices and PDAs, as well as on voice and data wireless services.

"WSCA is a loosely formed cooperative of 15 Western states and we have banded together to procure on a larger scale to get better pricing," said Greg Smith, administrator of the Nevada State Purchasing Division.

Smith, a vice chairman of WSCA, took the lead in Nevada's management of the wireless contract. The state of Nevada is the lead state in the wireless procurement, and involves other states to make sure that the overall contract meets the needs of all members.

"Each of the state organizations contributes in some way," Smith said. "We do the procurement. We let everyone know that we're doing this on behalf of all of the states."

All four major wireless providers, Cingular, T-Mobile, Verizon and Sprint, were represented in the contract. The contract provides for pre-negotiated prices for equipment and services for any state or municipality, and in some ways resembles the federal government's well-known GSA contracts.

"When we do something like this, Nevada does the original document and we circulate it to the other states to make sure that everything is covered," Smith said.

"Cingular has the largest share," said Chris Hill, vice president of government solutions for Cingular Wireless. Hill said that the WSCA award to Cingular is worth about \$2 billion, and is Cingular's largest contract.

"We are supporting 41 states where we have signed with participating addendums. It's our primary

contracting vehicle for state and local governments," Hill added.

Hill said that this contract is for the full range of Cingular's products. This includes all Cingular handsets, PDAs including the new 8525 and Blackjack, and BlackBerrys and Treos.

The WSCA contract will also provide discounts on wireless access cards and on wireless service, where governments will receive a 20 percent discount. Hill said that the discount on handsets will depend on the handset.

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Hill also said that Cingular is offering to bundle software from NetMotion Wireless, to provide mobile VPN services with persistent connections to governments that need that.

He said that in addition to states, cities and counties his company would offer the same pricing to state universities and other governmental organizations.

"The pricing that we received across the board is substantially better than anyone could have received on their own any other way," Smith said.

He noted that while state and local governments are permitted to use the WSCA contract, they are not required to do so. "Each state has the ability to add on smaller companies that may serve their areas," Smith said.

WSCA also awards multi-state contracts for a wide variety of other products and services including such things as desktop and laptop computers. The new wireless contract is available to state and local governments as of Jan. 1.

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