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GTE of the Southwest offers variety of services, telephones

By MARK A. BEATTY
Special to the Battalion
As long as there are people and businesses that need to communicate, there will be telephone companies.

General Telephone of the Southwest, a subsidiary of General Telephone and Electronics Corporation, serves portions of Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico, providing a multitude of products and services.

At the end of 1978, GTE Corporation had served more than 14 million telephones in 31 states, 64,000 of which were operating in the Bryan-College Station area.

Within the United States, the corporation's products group produces a wide range of communications systems equipment and devices, including electronic office switching equipment, automatic toll ticketing equipment and telephone instruments.

According to a report filed with the Securities and Exchange Com-

mission, the products group also has significant communications equipment manufacturing, marketing and installations operations outside of the United States.

In addition to being a major supplier of communications equip-

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ment to a number of overseas markets, the group is also a major manufacturer and installer of electronic systems for defense and aerospace applications in the United States and overseas. The corporation has received a number of multi-million dollar awards from various domestic and foreign government agencies.

The phone company, as most people know it, is not nearly this complex. GTE of the Southwest, the company serving the Bryan-College

Station area, is the former Southeastern States Telephone Company, a small independent operation. Purchased in 1964 by GTE, it was housed in a building at the corner of East 26th and Washington streets in Bryan. The plant, business office and all the operators were contained in that building. An equipment building was located on Nagle Street in College Station.

The Bryan offices have recently been combined with the College Station offices in a new building located on Industrial Boulevard in Bryan.

GTE of the Southwest has 36 Phone Marts similar to the one lo-

GTE has 36 phone marts similar to the one located in Culpepper Plaza, which opened in March, 1976.

located in Culpepper Plaza, which opened in March, 1976. Gaye Manning, service office supervisor at the B-CS facility, said most new customers go to the Phone Mart when requesting phone service.

"By going to the Phone Mart, the customer can actually see the ones, giving them more of a choice in colors and styles," Manning said. "There are about 74 phone variations available in both rotary and touch tone styles."

Deposits are based on estimated usage, Manning said. The deposit will be returned to the customer at end of 12 months provided the customer has paid all bills and has received no more than two notices for any unpaid bills. If the customer has no previous credit, parents or someone else who agrees to be liable may sign a "contract of guarantee" in lieu of a deposit. Once service has started, a monthly statement is mailed to the customer for the number of phones being used and all long distance calls made for that month.

GTE, like other telephone companies, is a heavily regulated business operation. Rates and tariffs are regulated by the Public Utilities Commission and the Federal Communications Commission (PUC). The PUC regulates all intrastate rates while the FCC regulates all interstate rates. All practices and general rules set by the corporation must be approved by the PUC.

Rates are higher for operator-handled calls than directly-dialed calls because there is an operator involved to make the call. Long distance calls are based on air mileage. Manning said a three-minute call from B-CS to Hearne, a small town

north of B-CS, cost 35 cents 25 years ago.

"Whether the customer talks one or two minutes, he still has to pay for the full three minutes," Manning said. "The present rate for the call is 10 cents per minute, the

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customer paying only for the amount of time he was on the line."

In-state calls are more expensive because more equipment is involved in collecting them. In the case of cable lines, Bill Erwin, district manager, compared in-state, out-of-state rates to highway city traffic.

"Think of out-of-state calls as driving on a super highway with congestion and few barriers," Erwin said. "In-state calls could be compared to inner city traffic with several barriers and much congestion."

Telephone rates in rural areas are generally higher than those in urban areas because there is less demand making the investment large for the phone company.

"There are also problems of cable damage and weather conditions," Erwin said.

The most economical time to make long distance phone calls is from 11 p.m. to 8 a.m.

"During this time the customer takes advantage of the idle time of the circuits," Erwin said. "There are usually 35 percent less daytime rates."

The overseas operator in Bryan handles 175 to 300 overseas calls a day, although not all of them are completed. Presently, the service here is not set for direct dialing overseas calls but this service is expected to be in operation sometime next year. If a customer places an overseas call with the operator, still receives the direct dialing rate.

The nature of the company here has made a tremendous

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on GTE's operations. With A&M University, there is a lot of activity taking place. Erwin said there is created with several thousand students moving back at the beginning of each semester. The company is constantly putting phones in and taking them out.

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