Standards Division, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service, room 2835–S, Washington, DC 20250–1500. RUS requires a signed original and three copies of all comments (7 CFR 1700.30(e)). Comments will be available for public inspection during regular business hours (7 CFR 1.27 (b)).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John J. Schell, Chief, Central Office Equipment Branch, Telecommunications Standards Division, Rural Utilities Service, room 2836–S, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250–1500, telephone (202) 720–0671.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Executive Order 12866

This proposed rule has been determined to be not-significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866 and therefore has not been reviewed by OMB.

Executive Order 12778

This proposed rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12778, Civil Justice Reform. This proposed rule will not:

- (1) Preempt any State or local laws, regulations, or policies, unless they present an irreconcilable conflict with this rule;
 - (2) Have any retroactive effect; and
- (3) Require administrative proceedings before parties may file suit challenging the provisions of this rule.

Regulatory Flexibility Act Certification

RUS has determined that this proposed rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities, as defined by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.). The changes to the General Specification for Digital, Stored Program Controlled Central Office Equipment in this proposed rule are updates which have been made so that RUS telephone borrowers can continue to provide their subscribers with the most up-to-date and efficient telephone service.

Information Collection and Recordkeeping Requirements

In compliance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations (5 CFR Part 1320) which implements the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 (Pub. L. 96–511) and section 3504 of that Act, the information collection and recordkeeping requirements contained in this proposed rule have been approved by OMB under control number 0572–0059. Comments concerning these requirements should be directed to the Office of Information

and Regulatory Affairs of OMB, Attention: Desk Officer for USDA, room 10102, New Executive Office Building, Washington, DC 20503.

National Environmental Policy Act Certification

RUS has determined that this proposed rule will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment as defined by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.). Therefore, this action does not require an environmental impact statement or assessment.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

The program described by this proposed rule is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Programs under No. 10.851, Rural Telephone Loans and Loan Guarantees, and 10.852, Rural Telephone Bank Loans. This catalog is available on a subscription basis from the Superintendent of Documents, the United States Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402–9325.

Executive Order 12372

This proposed rule is excluded from the scope of Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Consultation. A Notice of Final rule entitled Department Programs and Activities Excluded from Executive Order 12372 (50 FR 47034) exempts RUS and RTB loans and loan guarantees to governmental and nongovernmental entities from coverage under this Order.

Background

Since publication of the regulation on REA General Specification for Digital, Stored Program Controlled Central Office Equipment, the Federal Crop Insurance Reform and Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994, Public Law 103-354, 181 Stat. 3178 (Reorganization Act) has been enacted. Pursuant to the Reorganization Act the United States Secretary of Agriculture simultaneously abolished the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) and established the Rural Utilities Service (RUS). Rules formerly published by REA were reassigned to RUS pursuant to a final rule published in the Federal Register at 59 FR 66438. Therefore, this proposed rule culminating a rulemaking proceeding initiated by REA is being published by

RUS makes loans and loan guarantees to telephone systems to provide and improve telecommunications service in rural areas, as authorized by the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, as amended,

7 U.S.C. 901 et seq., (RE Act). RUS issues construction standards and specifications for materials and equipment. In accordance with the RUS loan contract, these standards and specifications apply to facilities constructed by RUS telephone borrowers. The Rural Electrification Loan Restructuring Act of 1993 (RELRA) (107 Stat. 1356) mandates the elimination of multiparty service. This proposed rule will eliminate the requirement in 7 CFR 1755.522 for multiparty service along with features which are associated with that service such as revertive calling and multifrequency ringing.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 1755

Loan programs—communications, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Rural areas, Telephone.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, chapter XVII of title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations is amended as follows:

PART 1755—TELECOMMUNICATIONS STANDARDS AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION

1. The authority citation for part 1755 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 901 et seq., 1921 et seq.

2. Section 1755.522 is amended by revising paragraphs (e)(5), (e)(6), (e)(7), (e)(11), and (e)(19)(vii), removing paragraph (f)(1)(ii), redesignating paragraph (f)(1)(iii) as paragraph (f)(1)(ii), removing paragraphs (g)(2)(ii), (g)(2)(iii), (g)(8), (g)(8)(i), and (g)(8)(ii),redesignating paragraphs (g)(2)(iv) through (g)(2)(xv) as paragraphs (g)(2)(ii) through (g)(2)(xiii), and paragraphs (g)(9) through (g)(12)(iii) as paragraphs (g)(8) through (g)(11)(iii), revising paragraphs (i)(2)(ix) and (p)(1)(vi), introductory text, amending paragraph (p)(3)(i) by removing the entry "Revertive" from the table, removing paragraph (r)(6), redesignating paragraphs (r)(7) through (r)(8)(vii) as paragraphs (r)(6) through (r)(7)(vii), and revising paragraphs (s)(5)(ii)(A), (s)(5)(ii)(C), introductory text and (s)(6)(ii) to read as follows:

§1755.522 RUS general specification for digital, stored program controlled central office equipment.

(e) * * *

(5) The basic switching system shall include the provision of software programming and necessary hardware, including memory, for optional custom calling services such as call waiting, call forwarding, three-way calling, and