

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: COMMISSIONER REDFORD
COMMISSIONER SMITH
COMMISSIONER KEMPTON
COMMISSION SECRETARY
COMMISSION STAFF

FROM: DON HOWELL

DATE: NOVEMBER 23, 2007

SUBJECT: INVESTIGATION INTO VERIZON NORTHWEST'S SERVICE
INTERRUPTIONS IN NORTHERN IDAHO, CASE NO. VZN-T-07-03

On August 13, 2007, the Commission issued Order No. 30408 initiating an investigation into a telephone service complaint filed by the Clearwater Valley Hospital and Clinics. The Hospital generally alleged that its telephone service from Verizon Northwest was "either intermittent or non-existent from June 12-14, 2007." When its telephone service was interrupted, the Hospital complained that it was unable to perform essential functions such as calling for air ambulance transportation, arranging for patient transportation, transmitting radiology images, and providing electronic medical records to physicians. The outages may have also affected customers in the Peck, Pierce, and Weippe exchanges. Verizon serves more than 118,000 wireline customers in northern Idaho.

In its Order No. 30408 the Commission directed Verizon to file a report "explaining the cause or causes of the local exchange outages on June 12-14, 2007." Order No. 30408 at 2. The Commission also ordered Verizon to address the extent of the service disruptions, the proposed immediate solutions to the outages, and the long-term plans for addressing the capacity of the microwave system serving the Orofino area. *Id.* at 2-3. Verizon was directed to address whether customers are due a credit for the disruption of their local exchange service pursuant to Rule 503, IDAPA 31.41.01.503.01 and .02.

VERIZON'S REPORT

In its timely filed report, Verizon asserted that there were no local exchange outages in the four exchanges (Orofino, Peck, Weippe and Pierce). The Company did acknowledge that there was a "degradation of service on part of the microwave radio path that feeds these four

communities that affected interexchange calls to and from these four exchanges.” Verizon Report at 1. Intra-exchange calling was unaffected. The Company explained that a component failure in the microwave system caused “half of the service capacity to be interrupted for several hours” on three different days: June 12 (approximately four hours); June 13 (approximately five hours); and June 14 (approximately seven hours). *Id.*

Verizon explained that the Orofino central office is served by digital microwave facilities located at Teaken Butte. At about noon on June 12, one of the two microwave radios between Teaken Butte and Orofino “experienced a service degradation for approximately four hours.” Report at 2. The “degradation” affected three of the six radio paths from Teaken Butte to Orofino. *Id.* During these four hours, calls to and from Pierce and Weippe could not be completed. Despite the service interruption, the Company stated that local calls within each of the four exchanges were unaffected by the service degradation, as well as calls between Orofino and Peck. *Id.* at 3.

At about noon on June 13, the microwave radio paths again experience trouble. Verizon stated that it dispatched additional personnel to inspect and replace various electronic components in both Orofino and Teaken Butte facilities. Verizon monitored the microwave paths throughout the night, “and there were no errors or service interruptions.” *Id.* On following day (June 14), the same radio system began experiencing trouble for approximately seven hours. Verizon and its equipment supplier (Alcatel) were able to isolate and resolve “a number of problems.” *Id.*

Verizon maintained that it has continued to monitor these radio paths in addition to performing diagnostics, recalibration and changing-out many of component parts. As a result of these actions, Verizon stated that the radio systems have been running error free since June 14, 2007. Nevertheless, Verizon is working with Alcatel to change a number of component parts in an attempt to avoid the problem from recurring. Verizon received and installed the additional replacement components in September 2007. *Id.* at 4.

In a Supplemental Report received September 18, 2007, Verizon reported that its long-term plan for addressing the microwave problem is to add additional high-capacity circuits. The Company indicated that engineering and planning for this construction project will begin in early 2008 with construction “expected to start in second quarter” of 2008. At such time as the completion date is known, the Company will advise the Commission. Supplemental Report at 1.

OTHER SERVICE DISRUPTIONS

After the Company filed its report, Staff received a report of service outages in Grangemont (served by Konkolville facilities). The customer complained that he had experienced about three service outages in the last two weeks. In response to this latest complaint, the Company indicated that it had upgraded all ten Alcatel radio systems to include all current software and hardware releases. The Company reported that the local service outage that occurred on November 9 was due to a SONET¹ card that affected approximately 250 to 300 customers in the Konkolville area. Verizon stated that service was restored the following day (25 hours later) and the Konkolville outage was not related to the Orofino radio system. The Company indicated that it will be "issuing local service credits as appropriate."

CUSTOMER SERVICE RULE

Telephone Customer Relations Rule 503 requires that when a telephone company providing local exchange service is notified of a service outage, it must generally restore service within 24-hours. "If the telephone company does not restore service within the times required by this subsection the telephone company must credit the customer's account an amount equal to the monthly rate for one (1) month of basic local exchange service." Rule 503.01, IDAPA 31.41.01.503.01(b).

COMMISSION DECISION

Does the Commission find that Verizon's report adequately addresses the microwave interruptions in the Orofino area? Is the Company's upgrading of software to current releases and its plans to add capacity to the digital microwave network reasonable?

Is the Commission satisfied with the Company's explanation regarding the Konkolville outage on November 9, 2007?

Anything else?



Don Howell

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¹ SONET means "Synchronous Optical Network Standard" and is a uniform high-speed fiber optic transmission standard.