

DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Division of Communications assists the Commission in carrying out its duties as prescribed by the Code of Virginia. It oversees the continued implementation of competition in landline telecommunications markets with the goal of achieving an effective regulatory environment that balances the advancement of competitive markets with the protection of consumers. The Division assists the Commission in developing, implementing, and enforcing alternatives to traditional forms of regulation as competitive markets evolve. It monitors, enforces, and makes interpretations on certain rates, tariffs, and operating procedures of investor-owned telecommunications utilities. The Division enforces service standards, assures compliance with tariff regulations, coordinates extended area service studies, enforces pay telephone regulations, and assists in carrying out provisions of the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996. The Staff testifies in rate, service, and generic hearings, and meets with the public on communications issues and problems. The Division maintains territorial maps, performs special studies, monitors construction programs, and investigates and resolves consumer inquiries and complaints. The Staff also monitors developments at the federal level, and prepares Commission responses where appropriate.

At the end of 2005, there were under the supervision of the Division:

14 Incumbent Investor-owned Local Exchange Telephone Companies
 168 Competitive Local Exchange Telephone Companies
 114 Long Distance Telephone Companies
 292 Payphone Service Providers

SUMMARY OF 2005 ACTIVITIES

Consumer complaints and inquiries	5,307
Tariff revisions received:	
Incumbent Local Exchange Companies	102
Competitive Local Exchange Companies	174
Interexchange Companies	130
Tariff sheets filed:	
Incumbent Local Exchange Companies	566
Competitive Local Exchange Companies	4,009
Interexchange Companies	3,321
Promotional Filings	
Incumbent Local Exchange Companies	55
Competitive Local Exchange Companies	249
Interexchange Companies	35
Cases in which staff members prepared testimony, reports, or comments	24
Certificates of Convenience and Necessity granted, amended, or canceled:	
Competitive Local Exchange Companies	49
Interexchange Companies	42
Interconnection Agreements/Amendments approved or dismissed	113
Extended Area Service studies completed or underway	5
Service quality surveillance and results analysis provided monthly on:	
Telephone Companies	15
Access Lines	4,787,423
Payphone registration and rules enforcement provided on:	
Local Exchange Company payphone service providers	13
Local Exchange Company payphones	23,069
Private payphone service providers	279
Private payphones	10,169
Payphone audits	748
Complaints Investigated	13
Show Cause Orders	2
Field investigations	22

OTHER:

Assisted the Commission in the continued implementation and operation of the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996.

Continued the Collaborative Committee on local competition market-opening measures.

Monitored Verizon Virginia's Performance Assurance Plan:

- Replicating monthly results
- Established criteria and scope for annual audit

Assisted Commission counsel with respect to formal rate, service and generic matters.

Analyzed the need to revise Commission rules regarding disconnection of service for nonpayment.

Participated in matters affecting communications policy with federal agencies.

Reviewed Verizon's ceiling price analysis implemented as a result of its new alternative regulatory plan.

Reviewed collocation exemption requests and updates.

Pursued various activities related to the Commission's alternative plans for regulating telephone companies, including the following:

- Reviewed proposed service classifications for new services, and reclassifications for existing services
- Evaluated Individual Case Basis (ICB) and Special Assembly price filings
- Assisted in gathering monitoring data

Continued outreach activities by making presentations to trade and citizens groups, associations, telephone companies, and a legislative committee.

Implemented new Service Quality Rules and a Telecommunication Bill of Rights.

Conducted industry implementation workshop for new Service Quality Rules.
Prepared status report on Verizon directory errors.
Participated in matters affecting communications policy with federal agencies.
Attended regional Atlantic Payphone Association quarterly meetings.
Responded to questionnaires from the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners ("NARUC") and others with respect to telecommunications matters.
Conducted informal operational reviews with Cox, Cavalier, Verizon and Sprint.
Managed Virginia's telephone number utilization program.
Worked with the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on overseeing the Telecommunications Relay Service. Monitored Telephone Relay Service funding.
Two staff members participated in NARUC's Consumer Affairs Staff Training.
Conducted analysis of the Virginia Universal Service Plan (service to low income customers).
Staff member serves on the NARUC Staff Subcommittee on Communications.
Staff member serves on the NARUC Staff Subcommittee on Accounting and Finance.
Staff member serves on the Advisory Council for the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.