

DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Division of Communications assists the Commission in carrying out its duties as prescribed by the Code of Virginia. The Division monitors, enforces, and makes recommendations on certain rates, tariffs, and operating procedures of telecommunications utilities. The Division enforces service standards, assures compliance with tariff regulations, coordinates extended area service studies, enforces pay telephone regulations, and prescribes depreciation rates. The staff testifies in rate, service, and generic hearings and meets with the general 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 follows developments at the federal level, and prepares Commission responses where appropriate.

SUMMARY OF 1996 ACTIVITIES

Consumer complaints and protests investigated	4,772
Telephone inquiries received	5,200
Tariff revisions received	249
Tariff sheets filed	3,508
Cases in which staff members prepared testimony or reports	55
Certificates of Convenience and Necessity granted or amended:	
Interexchange Carriers	11
Competitive Local Exchange Carriers	15
Interconnection Negotiated Agreements Approved	2
Interconnection Arbitrations Conducted	10
Depreciation studies completed	1
Extended Area Services studies completed or underway	34
Service Surveillance and Results Analysis Provided Monthly on:	
Access Lines	4,186,899
Switching Offices	431
Business Offices	24
Repair Centers	8
Pay Telephone Registration and Rules Enforcement provided on:	
Registered private pay telephone providers	574
Private pay telephones	11,835
LEC pay telephones	ALL
Pay telephone audits	264
Visits to:	
Customer premises to resolve customer complaints	29
Company premises to resolve customer complaints	14
Company premises to review service performance	58
Company premises to inspect network reliability	19
Construction Program reviews	2

OTHER:

Assisted Commission in promulgating procedural rules for implementing the Telecommunications Act of 1996; performed substantial review and analysis associated with evaluating this Act and related FCC Docket 96-98 impact on Virginia.

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

- Provided cost allocation technical support for six Annual Informational Filing audit reports
- Evaluated filings for six additions to existing competitive services
- Coordinated customer refund due to overearnings for one company
- 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

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

Participated in matters affecting communications policy with federal agencies.

Assisted with reports to the legislature and with developing telecommunications legislation.

Made presentations to trade and citizens groups, associations, and telephone companies.

Participated in matters affecting emergency 911 communications procedures with local government agencies and Virginia Telephone Industry Association.

Provided guidance to Virginia Payphone Association in its organization.

Assisted private pay telephone providers in resolving operations issues with local exchange companies.

Furnished annual verification information to the Federal Communications Commission to recertify eligibility for the Virginia Universal Service Plan, which provides assistance for low income telephone customers.

Responded to questionnaires from NARUC and others with respect to telecommunications matters.

Reviewed construction budgets of major telephone companies for 1996-1998 period.

Met with local governing bodies and citizens groups with respect to local calling areas and service problems.

Worked with Va. Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on monitoring of Telecommunications Relay Service in Virginia and preparation of a request for proposal for new contract.

Participated with JLARC on studying inmate telephone service.

Director reappointed to the NARUC Staff subcommittee on Communications.

Staff member reappointed to the NARUC Staff subcommittee on Depreciation.

Staff member reappointed to the NARUC Staff subcommittee on Communications.

Staff member reappointed to the NARUC Staff subcommittee on Service Quality.