

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 investor-owned telecommunications utilities. The Division enforces service standards, assures compliance with tariff regulations, coordinates extended area service studies, enforces pay telephone regulations, assists in carrying out provisions of the 1996 Telecommunications Act, 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.

At the end of 1998, there were under the supervision of the Division:

14	Incumbent Local Exchange Telephone Companies
65	Competitive Local Exchange Telephone Companies
50	Long Distance Telephone Companies
569	Private Pay Telephone Providers

SUMMARY OF 1998 ACTIVITIES

Consumer complaints and protests investigated	4,584
Telephone inquiries received	7,968
Tariff revisions received:	
Interexchange Companies	82
Incumbent Local Exchange Companies	140
Competitive Local Exchange Companies	98
Tariff sheets filed:	
Interexchange Companies	694
Incumbent Local Exchange Companies	1,323
Competitive Local Exchange Companies	5,377
Cases in which staff members prepared testimony or reports	45
Certificates of Convenience and Necessity granted or amended:	
Interexchange Carriers	17
Competitive Local Exchange Carriers	30
Interconnection Agreements Approved	79
Depreciation studies completed	2
FCC comments filed	2
Extended Area Service studies completed or underway	15
Service Surveillance and Results Analysis Provided Monthly on:	
Access Lines	4,674,808
Switching Offices	429
Business Offices	39
Repair Centers	12
Pay Telephone Registration and Rules Enforcement provided on:	
Private pay telephone providers	569
Private pay telephones	12,980
Local Exchange Company pay telephones	38,915
Pay telephone audits	207
Visits to:	
Customer premises to resolve customer complaints	32
Company premises to resolve customer complaints	24
Company premises to review service performance	54
Company premises to inspect network reliability	11
Construction Program reviews	4

OTHER:

Assisted Commission in continued implementation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

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

- Evaluated filings for one addition to existing competitive services
- 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 the Virginia Telephone Industry Association.

Provided guidance to the Virginia Payphone Association.

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

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

Reviewed construction budgets of major telephone companies for 1997-1998 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 and Department of Information Technology on monitoring of Telecommunications Relay Service in Virginia and preparation of a request for proposal for new contract.

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.