

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 monitors developments at the federal level, and prepares Commission responses where appropriate.

At the end of 1999, there were under the supervision of the Division:

14	Incumbent Investor-owned Local Exchange Telephone Companies
6	Cooperative Local Exchange Telephone Companies
109	Competitive Local Exchange Telephone Companies
72	Long Distance Telephone Companies
542	Private Pay Telephone Providers

SUMMARY OF 1999 ACTIVITIES

Consumer complaints and protests investigated	4,004
Telephone inquiries received	13,750
Tariff revisions received:	
Incumbent Local Exchange Companies	144
Competitive Local Exchange Companies	149
Interexchange Companies	99
Tariff sheets filed:	
Incumbent Local Exchange Companies	987
Competitive Local Exchange Companies	3,714
Interexchange Companies	977
Cases in which staff members prepared testimony or reports	70
Certificates of Convenience and Necessity granted or amended:	
Competitive Local Exchange Companies	53
Interexchange Companies	27
Interconnection Agreements Approved	77
Depreciation studies completed	1
FCC comments filed	4
Extended Area Service studies completed or underway	14
Service Surveillance and Results Analysis Provided Monthly on:	
Access Lines	4,898,688
Switching Offices	429
Business Offices	37
Repair Centers	15
Pay Telephone Registration and Rules Enforcement provided on:	
Private pay telephone providers	542
Private pay telephones	19,444
Local Exchange Company pay telephones	34,879
Pay telephone audits	235
Visits to:	
Customer premises to resolve customer complaints	41
Company premises to resolve customer complaints	25
Company premises to review service performance	75
Company premises to inspect network reliability	37
Construction Program reviews	2

OTHER:

Participated in numerous Y2K related activities.

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 Atlantic Payphone Association.

Assisted payphone service providers in resolving operations issues with local exchange companies.

Responded to questionnaires from the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners ("NARUC") and others with respect to telecommunications matters.

Reviewed construction budgets of major telephone companies.

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

Worked with Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on monitoring Telecommunications Relay Service in Virginia.

Assisted in preparing a petition to the FCC on number conservation.

Staff member serves on the NARUC Staff Subcommittee on Depreciation.

Staff member serves on the NARUC Staff Subcommittee on Communications.

Staff member serves on the NARUC Staff Subcommittee on Service Quality.