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**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Order Instituting Investigation to Address  
Intrastate Rural Call Completion Issues.

Investigation 14-05-012  
(Filed May 15, 2014)

**ASSIGNED COMMISSIONER'S RULING INVITING PARTY  
AND PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ISSUES RAISED  
AT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION HEARINGS AND WORKSHOPS**

The California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) requests comments on the Workshop Reports for the Call Completion Proceeding Investigation (I.) 14-05-012. Parties and the public may comment on the Workshop Reports, the issues raised in the Workshops, and make suggestions about Commission action to address the issues raised. The Workshop Reports are the transcripts of the following Workshops, available on the Commission's website in the proceeding's docket card:

June 1, 2016 (Long Beach); and
June 27, 2016 (San Francisco)
<b>Upcoming Workshop:</b>
September 20, 2016 (Felton)

Public Participation Hearings were also held in the Call Completion Proceeding I.14-05-012 in the following locations and their transcripts are available on the Commission's website in the proceeding's docket card. I invite

party and public comment on the issues raised in the PPHs, and suggestions about Commission action to address these issues:

June 1, 2016	Long Beach
June 27, 2016	San Francisco
July 6, 2016	San Andreas
July 15, 2016	Ukiah
July 15, 2016	Happy Camp
July 17, 2016	Eureka
August 23, 2016	Guerneville

Future Call Completion PPHs will occur at the following locations:

September 8, 2016	2016 Visalia
September 9, 2016	2016 Middletown
September 20, 2016	2016 Felton

With this ruling, we invite the public and the parties to comment on the hearing and workshop transcripts and to contribute any additional experiences or evidence regarding call completion and dial tone/9-1-1 access conditions in their locations they believe impact public safety and safe, reliable telephone service. To that end, please use the following questions as a guide in helping you focus the content of your comments:

**A. Questions:**

1. Have you experienced instances where you believe calls placed to your phone number have failed? If so, how did you learn of these instances?
2. When did those call failures occur, and have they continued?

3. Are there businesses, non-profits, public agencies, or residents in your area that have been impacted by call failures and outages? If so explain when and how.
4. Have there been instances of businesses, non-profits, public agencies, or residents learning that when people tried to call, they received a message that stated that your number has been discontinued or is not in service, when in fact it was in service?
5. Have you reported call completion failures when they have become known to you, and, if so, to whom?
6. Have you experienced dial tone or 9-1-1 outages? Of what duration have been the outages and what kind of facilities and services were involved? Wireline? Wireless? Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP)? Access to 9-1-1? Police? Fire? Other?
7. What companies have been involved in the outages, call completion failures, or false disconnected messages you experienced in California? Have you ever been unable to reach 9-1-1 in an emergency? Unable to reach other emergency services? How long were you unable to access 9-1-1 or otherwise out of service?
8. For those experiencing phone problems following the transition from Verizon to Frontier, have those problems lessened or stopped? If not, what problems with your telephone service still exist that didn't before the transition?
9. What other communications issues about your ability to place and receive calls would you like to bring to the Commission's attention?

**B. Themes Raised in Call Completion Workshops and PPHs and suggested Commission Action:**

Several themes were raised in the Call Completion Workshops and PPHs in the discussion of issues in completing calls, 9-1-1 and dial tone access. Please comment on these themes and whether any Commission action is recommended

to address these themes and issues. Included below are orders to respondents directing action on some of the issues raised in the workshops and PPHs and prompt reporting to the Commission through this docket:

- 1. Rural Call Completion:** Parties at PPHs in San Andreas and Happy Camp reported that instances of rural call completion failures, where a caller places a call to a rural exchange but the call is not received at that exchange and does not ring at the intended telephone number, have diminished. Parties at the Happy Camp PPH reported that some call completion failures are continuing, both involving calls within California and between California and other states, particularly Oregon. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) established a reporting system for call completion failures.

**Question:** Should the Commission establish a similar reporting system for call completion failures occurring within California? Should the Commission receive copies of reports of call completion failures involving other states? What other actions should the Commission take to identify, track, and address Call Completion failures?
- 2. Call Completion issues involving false disconnected messages:** At the PPH in Eureka a representative of 211 Eureka reported that they received reports that when a member of the Hoopa tribe called 2-1-1 from the Hoopa Temporary Assistance for Needy Families office, the caller received a message that the 2-1-1 number had been disconnected or was not in service, when, in fact, the number was in service and 2-1-1 staffers were in the office. The 211 representative and others at the Eureka meeting reported that local businesses in Eureka occasionally experienced false disconnected or not in service messages. **Order:** Through this Ruling, I direct respondent carriers serving Humboldt County, particularly AT&T, Suddenlink, Comcast, and Frontier, to meet to investigate this issue and take steps to

resolve any false disconnected or not in service messages. The carriers should meet with 211 Eureka and the Hoopa tribe, the Eureka Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations who spoke at the Eureka PPH to identify organizations and businesses that report their phone giving a false disconnected or not in service message. The respondent carriers shall be prepared to discuss the issue at the September 20, 2016 Call Completion Workshop in Felton, California, and shall serve and file their report with the Commission by September 23, 2016.

**Questions:** What other actions should the Commission take to identify and address false disconnected or not in service messages? Should the Commission consider opening a web portal to report telecommunications issues affecting the public such as false disconnected or not in service messages?

3. **Call Completion issues involving collect calls:** At the Guerneville PPH one speaker stated that some VoIP services are not able to receive collect calls.

**Questions:** Have others experienced issues with inability to receive collect calls since the opening of this proceeding in 2013? Have those issues been resolved? What steps should the Commission take to gather information about collect call issues, and to ensure that customers are able to receive collect calls regardless of technology or protocol?

4. **Network/Facilities Condition issues including pole and line safety in light of Commission General Orders and Tree Mortality State of Emergency:** At the San Andreas, Ukiah, Eureka, and Guerneville meetings several speakers raised concerns about the maintenance of telephone facilities including concerns about whether some poles are overloaded, leaning, have low wires, are attached to trees and or are near trees infested by pests, and have vegetation leaning on lines, and/or not maintained in accordance with General Order (GO) 95 or the undergrounding in accordance with General

Order 128. Some telephone wires are attached to trees in Tuolumne County and Mendocino County, and perhaps in other counties. Commission GO 95, rule 35, imposes a duty on the utility to trim dead, dying, or infested trees near their facilities. GO 95 requires electric and communications facilities to manage nearby vegetation to prevent hazards,

[http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/gos/GO95/go\\_95\\_rule\\_35.html](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/gos/GO95/go_95_rule_35.html): Vegetation Management, GO 95, rule 35

Where overhead conductors traverse trees and vegetation, safety and reliability of service demand that certain vegetation management activities be performed in order to establish necessary and reasonable clearances the minimum clearances set forth in Table 1, Cases 13 and 14, measured between line conductors and vegetation under normal conditions, shall be maintained. (Also see Appendix E for tree trimming guidelines.)

These requirements apply to all overhead electrical supply and communication facilities that are covered by this GO, including facilities on lands owned and maintained by California state and local agencies.

When a supply or communication company has actual knowledge, obtained either through normal operating practices or notification to the company, that dead, rotten or diseased trees or dead, rotten or diseased portions of otherwise healthy trees overhang or lean toward and may fall into a span of supply or communication lines, said trees or portions thereof should be removed.

**Questions:** Do these facility issues affect call completion, 9-1-1 access, or dial tone access, and if so how? What steps should the Commission take to address these issues? Do any of these issues reflect imminent threats to safety or the ability to make and complete calls? If so, please identify which ones and where they are located.

On October 30, 2015 Governor Brown declared a State of Emergency regarding Tree Mortality in light of the bark beetle infestation and other pest infestations, made worse by the state's drought. What actions should the Commission take to ensure compliance with GO 95 to address telephone lines, poles, or facilities near or on trees that are infested by the bark beetle or pests? Please submit any specific information about such lines, poles, trees, or facilities, including the location, and time and date of any photographs and who took the picture.

5. **9-1-1 and dial tone access issues:**

**A. Information about 911 and dial tone outages:** At several PPHs, including San Andreas and Ukiah, speakers including the Sheriffs of Mendocino County and the Deputy Sheriff of Tuolumne County raised issues about the lack of information available to Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) about 9-1-1 or dial tone outages and the concerns this raises for public safety. Several speakers suggested requiring reporting such outages to PSAPs, the Commission, local government officials, and the public. Carriers are required to report outages to the FCC only if 900,000 user minutes are affected, a threshold that is often not met in rural areas or for outages affecting a smaller number of customers.

**B. Network access, 9-1-1, and emergency response:** Speakers at San Andreas, Ukiah, and Happy Camp also discussed gaps in communications facilities, services, and networks, delays in establishing connections through a Cell-on-Wheels (COW) or Cell on Light Trucks, and other issues that affect reporting 9-1-1 emergencies, fire-fighting, public safety, addressing disasters, and disaster recovery.

**C. Emergency Telephone Notification System (ETNS):** At the San Andreas PPH, speakers testified about the process for gaining access to the databases of some telecommunications companies for the purpose of ETNS notice used to inform residents about evacuations

and public safety issues. Public Safety Officials learned during the Rim fire that the ETNS database for Tuolumne County did not contain the phone numbers of certain customers of a particular telephone company. During the Rim Fire, the County was informed that to access those phone numbers it had to purchase the database and sign confidentiality agreements. Tuolumne County deployed police officers and other public safety personnel to conduct door to door notifications in light of the ETNS gaps, and other public issues.

**Questions:**

**A. Information about 9-1-1 and dial tone outages:**

Should the Commission require 9-1-1 or dial tone outage reporting to PSAPs, the Commission, local government officials, CAL Office of Emergency Services, and/or the public, and at what threshold of outage should such reporting be required? Is 90,000 user minutes an appropriate threshold for outage reporting in California, or another threshold, and if so why? Should outage reporting be required in rural counties defined as those with a population of less than 600 people per square mile or less, or in both rural and urban counties, and if so why? Should all telephone corporations be required to report such outages, or only a subset such as wireline or wireless? Please discuss the legal issues regarding outage reporting and their relevance to the Commission's duties to ensure safe, reliable service, and universal service consistent with California Public Utilities Code Sections 451 and 709. Should outages be reported that affect PSAPs or others with public safety responsibilities such as fire stations, police stations, etc., including those on Native American reservations? What steps should the Commission take to make it easier for the public to report 9-1-1 and dial tone outage issues to the Commission? Should the Commission develop a mechanism to make such reports public, including publishing a map and

comment board about outages and service restoration that takes more than 24 hours, or other issues about conformity to Commission General Orders and Decisions?

**B. Network access, 9-1-1, and emergency response:**

What steps should this Commission take in this or other proceedings to address gaps in communications facilities, services, and networks, delays in establishing connections through a COW or COLTs, and other issues that affect reporting 9-1-1 emergencies, fire-fighting, public safety, addressing disasters, and disaster recovery?

**C. Emergency Telephone Notification System**

**(ETNS):** Do local emergency management personnel use ETNS systems? If so how? What are the criteria under which ETNS is activated? Are local emergency managers and PSAPs adequately informed about telecommunications carriers' processes and prices to gain access to customer information to populate ETNS databases?

- 6. Software Driven Outages:** At the June 1 and June 27 Workshops the parties discussed what Frontier reported were software driven outages after the transition from Verizon to Frontier. Representatives of Frontier reported that dial tone and 9-1-1 outages in April and May 2016 affected VoIP customers who had subscribed to Verizon and were attributed to corrupt data, data issues that resolved themselves in the Verizon database but not in the Frontier database, and mislabeling of network terminals at customer locations that hampered communication to the terminals to correct the data signal. The Communications Division has sent data inquiries to Frontier about the cause of these outages and directed Frontier to submit a root cause analysis about these outages. Frontier is herewith ordered to submit a public version of the root cause analysis covering these outages. The scope of this proceeding was expanded to include 9-1-1 and dial tone

issues after the April 2014 nine-hour outages of 9-1-1 service that affected several states including California. The FCC's Decision on that outage attributed the outage to software problems and practices by Intrado, a contractor to carriers including Verizon Wireless. The FCC found that 30,000 Californians, 13 PSAPs, and eight counties were affected by the Intrado outage. The FCC fined Intrado and Verizon Wireless for the actions that led to that 9-1-1 outage in 2014, and ordered corrective action.

**Questions: A. Frontier issues:** What additional steps should the Commission take regarding the Frontier outages of April-May 2016? Did the Frontier outages violate Commission rules and if so which ones, and what should the Commission do in response? Did the Frontier outages following the Verizon transition reflect any non-compliance by either Frontier or Verizon with the Commission's order approving the transaction, including the settlements? If so describe the non-compliance and recommend steps the Commission should take.

**B. Verizon/Intrado outage issues:** What additional steps should the Commission take regarding the Verizon Wireless 9-1-1 outages of April 2015? Did the Verizon-Intrado related 911 outages violate Commission rules and if so which ones, and what should the Commission do in response? What steps should the Commission take regarding the April 2014 outage of 9-1-1 service that was the subject of the FCC investigation?

**C. Software Driven Outages:** What additional actions should the Commission take to prevent, address, and track software-driven outages? What additional reporting, coordination, or other steps should be required to identify and address software-driven outages affecting dial tone and access to PSAPs by residential, business and public safety during emergencies?

7. **Service Issues:** At the June 1 and June 27 Workshops Frontier reported that actions by the call center based outside of the United States that Frontier hired to handle an anticipated increase in calls after the transition from Verizon contributed to the delay in resolving customer out of service and other complaints. Frontier stated that on some occasions the call center employees did not enter an appointment to address the customer issues, though the representative told the customer that an appointment was made. Frontier stated that it opened other avenues such as a Frontier e-mail address to make it easier for customers to report service problems and to coordinate responses.

**Questions:** Did these actions by Frontier's call center contractor violate any Commission rules, orders, or Decisions, and if so which ones? What actions should the Commission take to address the actions regarding Frontier's call center and the role it played in delaying restoration of customer service or knowledge of customer problems? What actions should the Commission take to facilitate customer reporting of dial tone and 9-1-1 outages to the Commission, the carrier, and any other relevant agencies including local PSAPs? Would a web portal that allows reporting of outages and restoration that takes over 24 hours, and other issues of non-conformity to Commission rules help address these issues and promote safe and reliable service? What other issues have parties or the public experienced in getting outages or 9-1-1 access, call completion issues, or false disconnected/out of service messages resolved? What should the Commission do about these issues?

**IT IS RULED that:**

1. I direct respondent carriers serving Humboldt County, particularly AT&T, Suddenlink, Comcast, and Frontier, to meet to investigate this issue and take steps to resolve any false disconnected or not in service messages. The carriers

should meet with 211 Eureka and the Hoopa tribe, the Eureka Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations who spoke at the Eureka PPH to identify organizations and businesses that report their phone giving a false disconnected or not in service message. The respondent carriers shall be prepared to discuss the issue at the September 20, 2016 Call Completion Workshop in Felton, California, and shall file and serve their report with the Commission by September 23, 2016.

2. Frontier Communications is ordered to file and serve a public version of the root cause analysis of the outages associated with the service transition from Verizon to Frontier in 2016 and the 9-1-1 outages in Riverside County in 2016 by September 20, 2016.

3. Any other party or public comments authorized by this ruling, or in response to questions raised by this ruling, shall be filed and served by October 4, 2016.

Dated September 8, 2016, at San Francisco, California.

/s/ WILLIAM JOHNSTON for  
Catherine J.K. Sandoval  
Assigned Commissioner