

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Commission) Application No. C-2483/PI-43
on its own motion, to re-examine)
it's Retail Quality of Service) ORDER RELEASING ALLTEL FROM
standards for all Local Exchange) MONTHLY REPORTING
Carriers operating within the) OBLIGATION
state of Nebraska.)
) Entered: October 16, 2002

BY THE COMMISSION:

On August 21, 2001, the Nebraska Public Service Commission entered its Findings and Conclusions with respect to the service quality provided by ALLTEL Nebraska, Inc. (ALLTEL), to its retail wireline customers.¹ The Commission ordered that the retail service provided by ALLTEL be subject to monthly monitoring and service quality audits.

On September 19, 2001, the Commission entered its Order Approving the Retail Service Compliance Plan (hereinafter referred to as the "Plan") for monitoring ALLTEL's performance. The Plan established 12 service standards that were further detailed in Appendix A-1 to the Plan. The Plan provided that ALLTEL was required to file monthly reports on 12 service measurements identified by the Commission and a requirement to meet the performance standards set therein. The service measurements included: directory assistance speed-of-answer, speed-of-answer for operator services, speed-of-answer for calls from residential customers to ALLTEL's business office, speed-of-answer for calls from business customers to ALLTEL's business office, speed-of-answer in ALLTEL's repair center, installation commitments met, average installation interval in days, out of service cleared within 24 hours, troubles cleared within 48 hours, repeat repair report rate, repair appointments met, and the trouble report rate. The Plan further required ALLTEL to meet the Commission's standards for six consecutive measurement periods (which are measured on a rolling average period of three consecutive calendar months with the first such three-month period commencing October 1, 2001) prior to seeking a discontinuance of the monthly reporting requirement.

¹ Our review of ALLTEL's service quality extends to their wireline operations only and does not extend to the service quality, including speed-of-answer times, for their wireless customer call centers.

Pursuant to the Plan, ALLTEL began reporting on its service quality by submitting historical data for the period of January 1 through August 31, 2001, relating to standards 1 through 5 and 12. This historical data was filed on October 1, 2001. ALLTEL began reporting data for all 12 service measurements on a going-forward basis in September of 2001. ALLTEL filed monthly results with the Commission from September 2001 through July 2002.

On January 8, 2001, the Commission met with ALLTEL representatives, in a public meeting, for the purpose of reviewing the status of ALLTEL's performance. The Commission was informed that ALLTEL had met 10 of the 12 service quality objectives, based on November 2001 data. On February 20, 2002, the Commission entered a progression order reviewing the service quality evidence presented by ALLTEL and set a further meeting for April 30, 2002.

Subsequent to the April 30, 2002, meeting, the Commission staff initiated an audit of ALLTEL's performance records. The audit included inquiries of company personnel relating to policies and procedures performed, analytical techniques involving comparisons of data and reasonableness tests, and judgmental sampling of data to test for areas subject to input validation. The audit report prepared by the Commission staff was filed on September 23, 2002. The report was made available to ALLTEL and the Commission.² The Commission staff's audit conclusions outlined three areas where corrective action was recommended. On October 11, 2002, ALLTEL filed its response letter to the staff audit report.

On September 6, 2002, ALLTEL filed a request for discontinuance of its reporting obligations accompanied by an affidavit attesting that ALLTEL had met or exceeded the performance objectives for six consecutive measurement periods. On October 1, 2002, a public meeting was held for a further progress report regarding ALLTEL's service quality. In that meeting, ALLTEL showed that it had met or exceeded the service measurements for six consecutive measurement periods and asked that it, be permitted to discontinue its reporting obligation.

² The Operational Audit of ALLTEL's retail quality of service measurement standards is a public record and is part of the record in the above-captioned docket.

O P I N I O N A N D F I N D I N G S

This proceeding was initially commenced to re-examine our retail service quality standards for all local exchange carriers operating within Nebraska. We held this examination in abeyance pending a review of ALLTEL's retail service quality performance for wireline customers. The purpose of which was to compare its service quality performance with that of Aliant's prior to the merger. What we discovered in the hearing as described in our Findings and Conclusions was that ALLTEL was not providing an adequate level of service to its retail customers; therefore, we required certain improvements.

Shortly after our findings and conclusions were issued, our staff met with ALLTEL representatives to develop a Retail Service Compliance Plan. The Plan as developed provided for monthly reporting, audits, quarterly meetings, unannounced visits and penalties for failure to comply with the Plan and the compliance time line. We approved this Plan by order on September 19, 2001. ALLTEL has complied with our reporting requirements as required by the Plan.

Of largest concern to us was the lengthy hold time ALLTEL's customers had to wait before reaching a customer service representative. Through the monthly reporting and the staff's service audit, it appears as though the hold time for wireline customers to the ALLTEL business office has reached an acceptable level. Other performance measures such as installation intervals, repair appointments met and trouble reports have also improved. ALLTEL has met the standards required by the Plan for the required measurement period. Accordingly, the Commission will release ALLTEL from its monthly reporting requirements. It is our expectation, however, that ALLTEL will continue to gather data on the twelve performance measurements on a continual basis for internal monitoring purposes. We envision this proceeding will eventually establish some form of service quality reporting obligation upon all Nebraska eligible telecommunications carriers (NETCs) and local exchange carriers, which will transition into a rulemaking proceeding. ALLTEL will be expected to continue its internal monitoring of the twelve performance measures until such time as this service quality rulemaking is completed.

O R D E R

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the Nebraska Public Service Commission that the request of ALLTEL to discontinue its monthly reporting obligation be, and it is hereby, granted.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that ALLTEL continue to collect data for the 12 service quality measures for internal monitoring purposes until such time as the service quality rulemaking contemplated by this docket is completed.

MADE AND ENTERED at Lincoln, Nebraska, this 16th day of October, 2002.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

Chair

ATTEST:

Executive Director