

**PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
STAFF REPORT
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: June 26, 2001**

REGULAR AGENDA X CONSENT AGENDA EFFECTIVE DATE

DATE: June 19, 2001

TO: Phil Nyegaard through Lance Ball

FROM: Irv Emmons

SUBJECT: Performance Plan Request, Qwest Business Office Access

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

Direct Qwest Corporation to provide a six-month plan for improving their business office access performance.

DISCUSSION:

Customers call the Qwest business office to request new service, transfers of service, additional lines, or to change service. Billing problems are also handled in the business office. The customer is processed through an interactive answering system. OAR 860-023-0055(8) contains a service quality standard for calls to the business offices of telecommunications carriers. When a call is routed to a "person", the representative must answer the phone within 20 seconds, 85% of the time. The business office access is the percentage of calls answered by a "person" within 20 seconds to the total number of calls to the business office representatives.

Qwest has failed to meet the business office access standard since August 1998. Staff has worked with Qwest during this period in an attempt to correct problems related to this violation. Qwest personnel have reported the following reasons for not meeting this standard:

- Significant attrition in personnel
- Difficult labor markets
- An increase in call handling time due to the low experience level of new personnel

The following actions were taken to improve Qwest performance:

- Increase the number of business office representatives
- A process reorganization to better handle calls
- An expansion of call sharing ability

These attempts to improve company performance have failed.

Qwest reported in their April 2001 Service Quality report, submitted on June 8, 2001, that Business Office Access was 29%; the standard is 85%. This is a significant drop in performance and is unacceptable. PUC Consumer Service complaints on Qwest

business office access have significantly increased with eight complaints between January 1, 2001 and April 30, 2001 to 68 complaints between May 1, 2001 and June 15, 2001. A formal plan is required for Qwest to perform to standard. The company needs to provide a detailed plan explaining how they will reverse their decline in service to their customers. This is required under ORS 759.450(5) and OAR 860-023-055(14).

Business office access performance history is presented in Table 1. Qwest reported residence and business levels separately in 1998 and since both failed to meet standard, a single violation for the month was counted as not meeting standard. A total of 33 continuous violations have occurred between August 1998 and April 2001. Other companies are experiencing problems meeting the business office access standard, but Qwest's problems are of a long-standing nature and are the most severe.

Table 1, Qwest Business Office Access

	1998 Residence	1998 Business	1999	2000	2001
January			50%	44%	53%
February			74%	65%	60%
March			69%	62%	53%
April			76%	69%	29%
May			62%	79%	
June			44%	76%	
July			49%	75%	
August	38%	72%	42%	76%	
September	41%	61%	32%	79%	
October	73%	75%	51%	81%	
November	60%	72%	52%	79%	
December	65%	64%	60%	77%	

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Commission direct Qwest Corporation to provide a six-month plan to improve their business office access performance to meet OAR 860-023-0055(8), as required in ORS 759.450(5) and OAR 860-023-0055(14).