
Colorado PUC Connections Newsletter – December 2000

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Starting point

In 1999, the Colorado legislature passed the Natural Gas Supply Retail Competition Act, which permits regulated utilities to submit voluntary plans to allow the entry of competitive gas suppliers in their territories. Under the law, if the plans are approved by the PUC, gas supply would be opened to retail competition, and the conditions for the regulation of a competitive market would be established. The distribution of the gas would remain regulated and under the control of the utility.

The act required the PUC to report to the legislature by Dec. 1, 2000, any voluntary plans submitted by utilities, as well as any recommendations for additional legislation to further the provision of natural gas to customers by competitive suppliers. In addition, the PUC was to report on whether it will initiate a rulemaking proceeding to provide for consumer protection mechanisms for natural gas customers

In addressing the issues raised under the act, the PUC took the following steps: During the summer and fall of 2000 the Commission researched gas unbundling activities in other states; In conjunction with the Office of Consumer Counsel, a Commissioners' Information Meeting was held in July with utilities and other interested parties concerning the implementation of natural gas unbundling in Colorado; and in September of this year the Commission sent letters to jurisdictional gas utilities and other industry stakeholders soliciting input on the implementation issues.

The PUC recently issued its report in compliance with the act, and I thought I would take this opportunity to summarize our findings.

- At the time the report was compiled, no utilities have submitted natural gas unbundling plans under this legislation. In response to a PUC request, no utilities provided a specific date for the filing of unbundling plans, although Public Service Company of Colorado and Kinder Morgan, Inc. stated they intend to file plans in the future.
- No utility or other stakeholder indicated that further legislation is warranted at this time. Further, all utilities and other stakeholders generally indicated that the voluntary nature of the legislation would not allow or warrant mandatory PUC authority to order gas unbundling. The Commission agrees that information from utilities and interested parties in Colorado, or from other states, does not support further legislation or the movement to mandatory natural gas unbundling at this time.
- The Commission believes that it would be premature to engage in a consumer protection rulemaking at this point, and would prefer to initiate rulemaking after the specific intentions of the utilities are established to a greater level of detail. This would allow the Commission and other parties to enter a rulemaking when the issues are more well defined.

Anyone interested in viewing the full report can find it on our web site at www.dora.state.co.us/puc.

Commission sets hearing over power line dispute

The Colorado Public Utilities Commission will conduct hearings in January to settle a dispute between Public Service Company and the City of Louisville over a proposed power line upgrade.

Public Service and the city are at odds over the company's proposed upgrade of an existing 115 kV transmission line that runs between Public Service's Valmont power plant in Boulder and its Broomfield substation. The city of Louisville wants the company to bury the transmission line, at a cost \$8 million more expensive than Public Service's \$1.3 to \$2 million estimated overhead construction costs, and has refused to grant Public Service the necessary permit to begin construction.

Public Service said it would bury the line if the city pays for the \$8 million extra cost. Louisville has requested that Public Service wait two years to construct the upgrade. That would give the city additional time to form a home rule municipality, and put the underground bond issue to a vote.

Public Service says it cannot wait two years without jeopardizing reliable electric service to its customers in Louisville and surrounding areas. The areas served by the Valmont-Broomfield line, which generally follow the Highway 36 corridor, have experienced substantial growth in the recent past and this growth is expected to continue in the future. The current line is inadequate to meet the present and future electric needs of the area, according to the company.

The PUC has already ruled that the upgrade is necessary. Public Service is now asking the Commission to resolve when the upgrade should take place, and whether it is just and reasonable to construct the upgrade above or below ground.

The PUC will take public comment on the matter at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 17, in the city

council chambers at Louisville City Hall, 749 Main St. A formal evidentiary hearing is scheduled for Jan. 18-19 at the PUC offices in Denver.

People wishing to provide written comments may send them to the PUC, 1580 Logan St., Denver, 80203. Comments should be addressed to Docket No. 00D-583E and should be received by Jan. 17.

Ruling expected in December on first round of electric bids

Public Service is looking to acquire 1,950 additional megawatts of power between now and 2005

The Public Utilities Commission is expected to hold deliberations in December on the first phase of Public Service Company's plan to acquire about 1,950 additional megawatts of electric power between now and 2005.

Public Service has asked the PUC to approve the competitive bids for additional electric generation that the company has selected for contracts under its electric resource planning process. Regulated electric utilities are required to file a plan with the PUC every three years outlining their resource needs for the next six years.

The PUC decided to hear the case in two phases because of the urgency of obtaining new generation to meet expected peak demand for electricity in the summers of 2001 and 2002. Hearings on some projects needed to come on line during those the first two years, about 930 megawatts, were scheduled to conclude the last week of November, with deliberations expected around mid-December.

The remaining projects will be considered during the second phase hearing, which is scheduled for Jan. 29 through Feb. 2, 2001.

Consideration of the generation projects is one of several dockets to come before the PUC concerning Public Service Company's long-range plans for serving its customers. The PUC in July approved an agreement that will allow the company to spend \$75 million over the next five years to expand its energy efficiency programs. These programs are expected to reduce electricity demand by up to 124 megawatts.

In October, the PUC approved a plan that would add an additional 25 megawatts of wind power to the company's Windsource program, and, in another docket, ruled that it would require continuing analysis and reports on the adequacy of the company's transmission system.

The Commission must determine whether the company's final 1999 resource plan is in the public interest by balancing the following interests outlined in the PUC's electric integrated resource planning (IRP) rules:

- The attainment of fair, reasonable and low prices for electricity;
 - The preservation of adequate and reliable electric service;
 - The protection of public health and safety;
 - The preservation of environmental quality and sustainability;
 - The management of risks attributable to electric resource acquisition;
 - The development of diversified electric resource portfolios;
 - The impact of utility decision-making on Colorado and local economies;
 - The maintenance of utility financial integrity.
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PUC 'opts in' to enforce FCC slamming rules

The Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has accepted primary responsibility from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for resolving Colorado consumers' "slamming" complaints.

The PUC notified the FCC via letter on Nov. 8 that it would "opt in" to new federal rules that make state commissions the lead enforcement agency in resolving complaints that involve the unauthorized switching of a customer's telephone service – a practice known as "slamming."

The new federal rules were to take effect on Nov. 28. But Colorado's decision to participate will make little difference because the PUC has been enforcing slamming complaints in the state since 1998, according to PUC External Affairs Manager **Barbara Fernandez**.

The PUC at that time adopted rules that spell out the procedures that must be followed by telecommunications companies in order to change a customer's local or long-distance provider. Colorado's rules also established remedies – that are more strict than those contained in the FCC rules – for customers if their telephone service is switched without permission.

Colorado rules prohibit the transfer of a customer's account unless that customer provides written authorization, electronic authorization, or verbal authorization with third-party verification.

Requests for a customer's written authorization must be on a separate document, the sole purpose of which is to authorize a change in carriers. It may not be combined with any other inducements, such as a sweepstakes or contest.

For verbal authorizations, the company must send the customer a confirmation request within three business days. If the customer does not confirm the change order by postcard within two weeks, the change order is to be cancelled.

The rules also require companies to offer customers the opportunity to "freeze" their selected provider, at no charge. Once a freeze is in place, written authorization initiated by the customer is required in order to change long-distance carriers.

Companies that initiate an unauthorized change in a customer's telephone provider under the new rules are liable to the customer for all intrastate long distance charges, interstate long distance charges, local service charges, switching fees, the value of any premiums to which the customer would have been entitled, and any other relevant charges incurred by the customer during the period of the unauthorized change.

Companies violating the slamming provisions also are liable to the customer's local telephone company for the switching fees for the unauthorized change and reinstating the customer to the original provider.

Consumers may contact the PUC regarding their slamming complaints by letter, fax, e-mail message or telephone call to the Commission.

New relay administrator also serving on Commission for Deaf

Joe Benedetto is the new administrator of the state's Relay Colorado program, which provides telecommunications services for people with hearing or speech impairments.

After three months on the job, **Joe Benedetto** is settling in to his new role as the administrator

of the state's telecommunications relay service.

Benedetto began his new position with the Public Utilities Commission in late August, replacing Bill Stricklen, who took a job with Sprint Communications.

As relay administrator, Benedetto manages the Relay Colorado program, which provides telecommunications services for people with hearing or speech impairments. Specially trained agents relay calls over a Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), or verbally with hearing parties.

More than 57,000 calls per month are placed in Colorado using the relay system, which is funded by a 10-cent monthly assessment of all telephone customers in the state.

"One of my goals is to ensure that consumer revenues are used wisely at the lowest possible cost for the best possible service for Relay Colorado," Benedetto said.

Another key objective is to enhance and improve 9-1-1 TDD access for deaf and disabled Coloradans, he said. That was identified as the top priority in a survey of people with hearing or speech disabilities conducted by the PUC last year.

In addition to his role as relay administrator, Benedetto has been appointed to the newly-created Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The commission, established by the legislature this year, was created to serve as a liaison between the deaf and hard of hearing community and the governor, legislature and state departments and agencies. Benedetto is one of seven commissioners on the panel.

Benedetto is an ordained Roman Catholic Deacon, working with the deaf community at Holy Cross Church in Thornton. He also is a member of the Colorado Association for the Deaf and a member of the Deaf Community 9-1-1 Task Force.

Benedetto holds a bachelor's degree in government from Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., and a master's in education from Western Maryland College in Westminster, Maryland. He has done graduate work at Louisiana State University and completed his Diaconate preparation program at Lafayette, Louisiana. He has been a high school teacher, and an American Sign Language instructor.

"I look forward to this opportunity as relay administrator and commissioner to serve all Colorado citizens by improving the quality of services to people with hearing and speech impairments," he said.

Inside Connections

Thedora Jackson's career aspirations have ranged from museum curator to hair stylist to real estate broker. Which might explain why she places a high value on variety in her current job.

Thedora is a general professional in the PUC's External Affairs section, providing assistance to consumers who have questions or complaints about their utility services. Her job is to help resolve customer issues about rates or service by making sure that utilities follow their tariffs and comply with PUC rules.

"I like the variety," she said. "Each day is different, each consumer is different. Every time I think I have heard all the questions and complaints, a new one pops up."

Thedora started at the PUC as an administrative assistant in 1997, and moved into a consumer

complaint position the following year. Prior to joining the PUC, Thedora worked at a temp agency, and was named "Temp of the Year" in 1992.

Thedora attended the University of Colorado at Boulder and attained a bachelor's degree in Anthropology with minors in Fine Arts and French.

"I wanted to be a museum curator and specialize in restoration and preservation of antiquities," she said.

When that path didn't work out, Thedora had plenty of other interests to pursue. She worked in retail management, obtained a Real Estate Broker Associates license, and she also has a Cosmetology license. Eventually, she said she hopes to get a graduate degree in computer technology, public relations and marketing.

Thedora's personal interests are as varied as her professional ones. She belongs to the National Geographic Society, Denver Botanic Gardens, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Eden Theatrical Work Shop, The People of Color Book Club, Baila Salsa Club of Denver and Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society. She also volunteers for the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance School, Denver Performing Arts Festival and the Heritage Village Drummers and Dancers.

Her hobbies include fashion design, costume design, gourmet cooking and baking, Salsa dancing, and indoor gardening. She also performs with a West Afrikan Dance Troupe called "Joda and Friends," which performed for the Colorado State Cultural Diversity Week this year.

"In a perfect world, all things are possible. Our world isn't perfect, so do what you can," she says.

(Inside Connections will feature a PUC employee each edition as selected by PUC section chiefs.)

PUC motors into world of electronic filings

The Colorado Public Utilities Commission has officially entered the world of e-government. The Commission began accepting electronic insurance filings for interstate and intrastate motor carriers in September.

All for-hire motor carriers operating in Colorado are required to file proof of current insurance with the PUC. Historically, this has been done through hard copies sent to the PUC by insurance companies. Often, the filings contain incorrect or missing information, especially for companies that do business in multiple states under multiple names.

For about the past year, the PUC has been testing a new electronic insurance filing system designed to eliminate those mistakes and allow insurance companies to make filings consistent with the way each state has registered the carriers. The system went live on Sept. 15, according to **Ron Jack**, the PUC's director of Administrative Services.

"The number of insurance filings that we process has been growing by about 5,000 a year, and about 20 percent of that increase can be attributed to erroneous filings," Jack said. "We hope this new system can reduce the number of erroneous filings."

The electronic system also allows errors that do occur to be corrected within minutes instead of days of mailing back and forth under the hard-copy system.

Through the program, a company called the National Information Consortium (NIC) collects motor carrier information from all states. Instead of making individual filings in each state a

carrier operates, insurance companies pay NIC to send out electronic filings to each state that include the appropriate information for that state.

The Colorado PUC processed about 30,000 insurance filings last year, according to Jack. In addition to electronic insurance filings, the PUC is looking at other applications of e-government, including electronic filing of motor vehicle carrier registrations.

Positive charges

The PUC's 2000 Colorado Combined Campaign "Welcome to the Islands Contest" was a success. Campaign co-coordinators **Deb Fajen** and **Randy Garrouette** report that more than half of the PUC employees contributed to the Colorado Combined Campaign this year and nearly \$5,000 will be distributed to the various programs. On behalf of the recipients of your generousities ... mahalo (which, for all you Haoles, is Hawaiian for "thanks.")

Welcome to the following new PUC employees: **Joe Benedetto**, the new administrator of the state's telecommunications relay service; **Carolyn Gable**, an administrative assistant in the Executive office; **Cheryl Fisher**, an administrative assistant in the Transportation section; and **Douglas Platt**, a general professional in the External Affairs section.

Best wishes to **Joyce Reed**, manager of the PUC Information Center, who retired on Oct. 31 after 34 years of service at the Commission. Joyce reports that after 34 years of witnessing the truly needy people who inhabit downtown Denver, she hopes to embark on activities that will bring joy and comfort to others.

Hearing room gets more room

One of the most noticeable results of the recent remodeling at the PUC was the expansion of Hearing Room B. The secondary hearing room is about double the size it was previously, alleviating the cramped conditions that often existed. New, modular cubicles and better use of existing space are among the other benefits of the remodeling project.

January hearings set on PSC gas rate hike

The Colorado Public Utilities Commission will hold hearings in January on a proposal by Public Service Company to increase its natural gas rates by \$39.8 million a year.

Formal evidentiary hearings are scheduled from Jan. 8-12 on the rate request. Public comment will be taken from 4-6 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 11. The hearings will be at the PUC, 1580 Logan St., in Denver.

Public Service has proposed to increase residential rates by 5.13 percent, or about \$2.46 a month for a typical residential bill. Commercial rates would increase 3.74 percent, or \$7.49 a month under the proposal.

The increase would be used to pay for investments in the company's gas delivery system. Public Service said that it has invested \$154.2 million in its system since its last gas rate increase. The proposed increase is separate from a recent increase due to the sharp rise in natural gas commodity rates. Those commodity increases are passed on to customers on a dollar-for-dollar

basis. The company does not earn any profit on the price of the natural gas commodity.

In addition to the increase in monthly rates, Public Service is requesting a reduction of more than 50 percent in the construction allowance credit that is applied to extensions for new gas facilities. That means new customers would pay more of the initial costs of connecting to the gas delivery system, instead of those costs being recovered from all ratepayers.

The rate hike request is the third sought by Public Service Company in the last four years. In 1997, the PUC approved an \$18.6 million increase in natural gas rates, and in 1999, the company was granted a \$14.8 million increase.

The latest request also seeks an increase in Public Service Company's authorized rate of return on equity from 11.25 percent to 12.5 percent for the company's natural gas operations. The return on equity is the measurement of profit. The PUC authorizes a return on equity, but it is not guaranteed.

Customers who wish to comment on the rate proposal may write to the PUC, 1580 Logan St., OL2, Denver, CO 80203. Comments should be addressed to Docket No. 00S-422G and should be received by Jan. 8.

Consumer Tip - *Take these steps to manage higher gas bills*

The rapid rise in natural gas prices, starting earlier this year, has raised concerns about the effect it will have on consumers. The commodity price for natural gas is projected to be nearly double the level from last winter. These prices ultimately will fall on the shoulders of retail gas consumers, some of whom will find it especially difficult to absorb in view of budget and income constraints.

Higher gas prices inevitably translate into higher gas bills. While gas prices have increased over the last several months, most consumers have not yet felt the impact because of low consumption during the non-winter period. Consumers will begin to experience the brunt of high gas prices during this coming heating season. Especially if this winter turns out to be colder than normal, consumers' gas bills will be significantly higher than what they were over the last several winters.

Consumers need to remember that the wholesale natural gas market is a competitive market and the Public Utilities Commission has no control over the price of natural gas. Both increases and decreases in the cost of purchasing natural gas are passed along to consumers on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The utility does not make any profit from the natural gas commodity itself.

What can consumers do to cope with, and prepare for, higher gas prices? Here are some steps that consumers can take to manage their winter gas bills:

- One option is to conserve on the use of natural gas. Lower consumption lessens the burden of higher gas prices by reducing the amount of dollars flowing from consumers for a given increase in price. In most markets, consumers cushion the impact of higher prices by cutting back on consumption. For example, the doubling of electricity prices this summer in San Diego caused people to reduce use of their home air conditioners in order to curtail electricity consumption. Although some conservation efforts may be costly, and prohibitively expensive for some consumers, others can be achieved at low cost.
- A second option for consumers is to take advantage of bill payment plans, if offered

by their local gas utility, to even out their monthly gas bills. These plans allow consumers to reduce their winter gas bills by paying more during other times of the year when gas consumption is typically much lower.

- A third option is for consumers who qualify to take advantage of energy assistance programs administered by different levels of government. For example, several states, including Colorado, have low-income programs that subsidize poor households who otherwise would find it difficult to pay their gas bills, especially during the winter months. As the gap between unsubsidized gas bills and "affordable" gas bills increases, it becomes more imperative for low-income households to avail themselves of assistance programs. Colorado customers who need help paying their energy bills should call the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) 1-800-782-0721 or the Colorado Energy Assistance Foundation at 303-825-8750 to see if they qualify for assistance.
- A fourth option is for consumers to familiarize themselves with their gas utility's disconnection policies. Consumers should also contact their utility prior to reaching the point of disconnection so payment plans can be worked out or funds from assistance programs can be made available.

Greeley Gas seeks 7.7 percent increase in gas service rates

Greeley Gas Company has asked the Public Utilities Commission to increase its gas service rates by 7.7 percent, or \$4.28 million a year.

The company has proposed that the new rates go into effect Dec. 15. However, it is likely that the PUC will suspend the proposal and hold hearings on the request early next year.

Greeley Gas serves about 90,000 customers in 60 Colorado communities, including the towns of Greeley, Canon City, Lamar, Durango, Steamboat Springs and Craig.

The company's service territory is divided into four divisions in Colorado – Northeast, Northwest/Central, Southeast and Southwest. Under the proposal, the average monthly increase for customers in each of the divisions would be as follows: Northeast – residential \$3.09, commercial \$10.71; Northwest/Central – residential \$2.04, commercial \$8.87; Southeast – residential \$2.18, commercial \$7.85; Southwest – residential \$2.22, commercial \$10.69.

The increase would be used to pay for investments in the company's delivery system along with technology-based and productivity improvements. Greeley Gas said it has added 32 percent more customers and has invested more than \$54 million in its gas delivery system since its last rate increase, which took effect in May of 1994.

The proposed increase is separate from recent increases due to the sharp rise in natural gas commodity prices. Those increases are passed on to customers on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The company does not earn any profit on the price of natural gas.

The company is asking for an increase in its authorized rate of return on equity from 11.25 percent to 12.5 percent. The return on equity is the measurement of profit. The PUC authorizes a return on equity, but it is not guaranteed.

Customers who wish to comment on the rate proposal may write to the PUC, 1580 Logan St., OL2, Denver, Co 80203.

Hearings on Leyden closure delayed to December

Hearings on Public Service Company's application to abandon the Leyden Natural Gas Storage Facility, postponed from October, were rescheduled for Dec. 5-6 at the Public Utilities Commission.

Public Service in May asked the PUC to approve its plan to close the 40-year-old storage facility located northwest of Arvada because it is no longer compatible with the land uses and development in the surrounding area.

The PUC ruled this summer that its review of the application would be limited to whether the decision to abandon Leyden is an appropriate one and, if, so, does Public Service have a plan in effect that will ensure an adequate supply of gas for all of the company's customers in the future. Other issues, such as details of the decommissioning plan and restoration of the site to its natural state, are outside of the PUC's jurisdiction.

Hearings were originally scheduled for Oct. 24-25 on the application. However Public Service requested and was granted a six-week delay to finalize replacement contracts with other natural gas suppliers and storage providers to satisfy peak winter demands if the Leyden facility is closed. A final PUC decision on the application is expected no later than February.

Public Service said it intends to close the Leyden facility following the 2000-2001 heating season. The decommissioning would occur in phases beginning in the fall of 2001 and concluding by the end of 2005.

The former underground coal mine has been used as a natural gas storage facility since the early 1960s. It has helped maintain gas pressure during cold snaps to avoid natural gas outages, and it has helped to keep rates low by using low-cost storage gas during cold spells when natural gas is sold at a premium.

Public Service has estimated the cost of shutting down the facility to be \$8.6 million. However, the issue of cost recovery is not a part of the present application. Public Service said it intends to file a proposal with the PUC at a later time to recover the decommissioning costs from the company's one million natural gas customers.

Bailey granted local calling to Fairplay

The Public Utilities Commission has granted a request from Park County to expand local calling between Bailey and the county seat of Fairplay.

An Administrative Law Judge in November approved an agreement reached by the county, Qwest Communications, PUC staff and the Office of Consumer Counsel. In addition to local calling between Fairplay and Bailey, configuration of the expansion also will result in local calling between Bailey and Woodland Park, and between Fairplay and Deckers.

Because Bailey and Fairplay are separated by the area code boundary between the 303/720 and 719 area codes, implementation of the expansion is contingent upon Qwest receiving a waiver from the Federal Communications Commission to carry local calls across the boundary line.

Under PUC rules, local calling areas, to the extent possible, should "allow customers to place and receive calls without payment of toll chares to 9-1-1, their county seat, municipal government, elementary and secondary school districts, libraries, primary centers of business activity, police and fire departments, and essential medial and emergency services."

Evidence showed that about 60 percent of Park County's population lives in the Bailey area, and currently Bailey residents must make long-distance calls for a number of Park County governmental services, including the county and district courts, jail, health services, cooperative extension office and county offices, which are all located in Fairplay.

The county commissioners of Park County all live near Bailey and must make toll calls to county offices in Fairplay. And businesses and employers in Bailey and Fairplay serve customers and employees in both communities.

Creating a local calling area that includes Bailey and Fairplay permits more efficient operations of Park County's governmental services by improving the ease of communications between government offices and its citizens, the PUC found.

Qwest estimates that it will take until January of 2002 to complete the local calling expansion. Implementation will require replacing or upgrading switching equipment and interoffice facilities in Fairplay, Deckers and Woodland Park. Qwest will provide written notice to all customers in the affected exchanges prior to the cutover.

Customer rates will not be impacted by the changes. Qwest will pay the costs of the expansion from an \$8 million pot that the company agreed to set aside in 1999 for expanded local calling in the 719 and 970 area codes.

PUC approves expanded calling for Berthoud

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has approved an agreement that will expand the town of Berthoud's local calling area by the end of next summer.

The PUC in November accepted a settlement reached by the town, Qwest Communications, Commission staff and the Office of Consumer Counsel. The agreement calls for expansion of the town's local calling area to include the exchanges of Eaton-Ault, Windsor, Greeley, Johnstown-Milliken, Gilcrest, Platteville and Estes Park in the 970 area code. Berthoud currently has local calling to Longmont, Loveland, Fort Collins and Mead.

The town of Berthoud lies in both Larimer and Weld counties, with much of the town's new growth occurring in Weld County several miles to the east. The current local calling area requires the residents of Berthoud in the eastern portion to make long distance calls when calling their county seat in Greeley. In addition, Berthoud communicates with the Greeley Planning Department to coordinate planning and zoning in eastern Berthoud and the surrounding area.

In finding that a "community of interest" exists between Berthoud and the additional exchanges to the east and west, the PUC recognized that many residents in the Berthoud exchange send their children to schools in Johnstown, and that Berthoud high schools and middle schools participate in the same sports leagues with towns both to the east and west, which currently require long-distance calls.

In addition, the nearest hospitals to Berthoud are in Loveland and Greeley, and the town is in the same planning area with Greeley, Johnstown and Windsor.

Implementation of the local calling area expansion is not expected to occur until Aug. 31 of 2001. According to Qwest, an expansion of the Berthoud exchange switch will not be completed until next June, and implementation of the local calling changes will require an additional 60 days once the switch is upgraded.

The expansion will not increase basic local rates for any telephone customers. Qwest will pay the costs of the expansion from an \$8 million pot that the company agreed to set aside in 1999 for expanded local calling in the 719 and 970 area codes.

PUC adopts changes to 9-1-1 service rules

Modifications to the rules concerning the provision of emergency 9-1-1 service in Colorado could take effect by the end of January.

The Public Utilities Commission in November adopted the proposed changes, which were designed to update technical standards and reflect changes in the telecommunications industry. The rules become effective 20 days after publication by the Secretary of State's office.

The PUC is empowered by law to establish standards and prescribe rules for 9-1-1 service in the state. A statewide 9-1-1 task force, created by the PUC in 1992, makes recommendations to the Commission on technical standards and other issues concerning the provision of emergency reporting services.

Among the rule changes adopted by the PUC:

- Reference to wireless telecommunications services as necessary participants concerning the provision of 9-1-1- service, specifically regarding interconnection between wireless providers and local exchange carriers or basic emergency service providers.
- Incorporation by reference of updated National Emergency Number Association technical standards for the provision of 9-1-1 service.
- Allowing the use of the 9-1-1 database for outbound notifications in time of emergencies. For example, an automated call from a public safety agency to residences and businesses in a geographic region threatened by fire, flood, etc.
- Revision of the Colorado PUC reporting requirements for 9-1-1 outages to mirror those of the Federal Communications Commission. The revisions would extend the time that a basic emergency service provider has to report the details of a 9-1-1 outage to PUC staff.
- Recognition of Enhanced 9-1-1 (E-9-1-1) service as falling under the definition of regulated telecommunications services.
- Recognition of the potential for multiple basic emergency service providers within the state.

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