

CHAPTER 26. SUBSTANTIVE RULES APPLICABLE TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS.

Subchapter C. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RELIABILITY.

§26.54. Service Objectives and Performance Benchmarks.

- (a) **Applicability.** This section establishes service objectives for a dominant certificated telecommunications utility (DCTU), as applicable. A deregulated company that holds a certificate of operating authority or a transitioning company in a market that is deregulated, is exempt from complying with the retail quality of service standards and reporting requirements in this section.
- (1) This section outlines performance benchmark levels for each exchange. If service quality falls below the applicable performance benchmark for an exchange, that indicates a need for the utility to investigate, take appropriate corrective action, and provide a report of such action to the commission.
 - (2) The objective service levels are based on monthly averages, except for dial service and transmission requirements, which are based on specific samples. DCTUs must make measurements to determine the level of service quality for each item included in this section.
 - (3) Upon commission request, a DCTU must provide the commission with the measurements and summaries for any of the service or performance benchmarks provided by this section. Records of these measurements and summaries must be retained by the DCTU as specified by the commission.
 - (4) For purposes of this section, an “answer” means that the operator, interactive voice system, or representative, is ready to render assistance or ready to accept information necessary to process the call. An acknowledgment that the customer is waiting on the line does not constitute an answer.
- (b) Each DCTU must comply with the service quality objectives established below in providing the basic telecommunications service to its end-use customers and must file its service quality performance report on a quarterly basis. The report must include its monthly performance for each category of performance objectives and provide a summary of its corrective action plan for each exchange in which the performance falls below the benchmark. Additionally, the corrective action plan must include, at a minimum, details outlining how the necessary improvements will be implemented within three months from the filing of the service quality performance report and will result in performance at or above the applicable benchmark.
- (1) **Installation of service.** Unless otherwise provided by the commission:
 - (A) Ninety-five percent of the DCTU’s service orders for installing primary service must be completed within five working days, excluding those orders where a later date was specifically requested by the customer. Performance Benchmark Applicable for Corrective Action: If the performance is below 95% in any exchange area for a period of three consecutive months, the DCTU must provide a detailed corrective action plan for such an exchange or wire center.
 - (B) Ninety percent of the DCTU’s service orders for regular service installations must be completed within five working days, excluding those orders where a later date was specifically requested by the customer. This includes orders for any primary service, installation, move, change, or other service, except for any complex service. Performance Benchmark for Corrective Action: If the performance is below 90% in any exchange area for a period of three consecutive months the DCTU must provide a detailed corrective action plan for such an exchange or wire center.
 - (C) Ninety-nine percent of the DCTU’s service orders for service installations must be completed within 30 days. Performance Benchmark for Corrective Action: If the performance is below 99% in any exchange area for a period of three consecutive months, the DCTU must provide a detailed corrective action plan for such an exchange or wire center.

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- (D) One-hundred percent of the DCTU's service orders for service installations must be completed within 90 days.
 - (E) Each DCTU must establish and maintain installation time commitment guidelines for the various complex services contained in the DCTU's tariff. Those guidelines should be available for public review and should be applied in a nondiscriminatory manner.
 - (F) The installation interval measurements outlined in subparagraphs (A)-(D) and (H) of this paragraph must commence by either the date of application or the date on which the applicant qualifies for service, whichever is later.
 - (G) The DCTU must provide to the customer a commitment date on which the requested installation or change will be made. If a customer requests that the installation or change be performed on a regular working day later than the date proposed by the DCTU, then the customer's requested date will be the commitment date. If a premises visit is required, the DCTU must schedule an appointment period with the customer for the morning or afternoon, not to exceed a four hour time period, on the commitment date. If the DCTU is unable to keep the appointment, the DCTU must attempt to notify the customer by a telephone call and schedule a new appointment. If unable to gain access to the customer's premises during the scheduled appointment period, the DCTU's carrier representative must leave a notice at the customer's premises advising the customer how to reschedule the work.
 - (H) Ninety percent of the DCTU's commitments to customers for the date of installation of service orders must be met, excepting customer-caused delays. Performance Benchmark Applicable for Corrective Action: If the performance is below 90% in any exchange area for a period of three consecutive months, the DCTU must submit a list of missed commitments to the commission and provide a detailed corrective action plan for such an exchange or wire center.
 - (I) The installation interval and commitment requirements of subparagraphs (A) - (D) and (H) of this paragraph do not include service orders either to disconnect service or to make only record changes on a customer's account.
 - (J) A held regrade order means an order not filled within 30 days after the customer has submitted an application for a different grade of service, except where the customer requests a later date. In the event of the DCTU's inability to so fill such an order, the customer must be advised and told when the DCTU can fulfill the order. The number of held regrade orders must not exceed 1.0% of the total number of customer access lines served.
- (2) **Operator-handled calls.** For each exchange, a DCTU must, on a monthly basis, maintain adequate personnel to provide an average operator answering performance as follows :
- (A) Eighty-five percent of toll and assistance operator calls answered within ten seconds, or average answer time must not exceed 3.3 seconds. Benchmark for Corrective Action: If the performance is either below 85% within ten seconds or if the average exceeds 3.3 seconds at any answering location in any given month, the DCTU must provide a detailed corrective action plan for such an exchange or wire center.
 - (B) Ninety percent of repair service calls must be answered within 20 seconds or average answer time must not exceed 5.9 seconds. Benchmark for Corrective Action: If the performance is below 90% within 20 seconds or the average answer time exceeds 5.9 seconds at any answering location for a period of five days within any given month, the DCTU must provide a detailed corrective action plan for such an exchange or wire center.
 - (C) Eighty-five percent of directory assistance calls must be answered within ten seconds or the average answer time must not exceed 5.9 seconds. Benchmark for Corrective Action: If the performance is either below 85% within ten seconds or if the average

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- answer time exceeds 5.9 seconds at any answering location in any given month, the DCTU must provide a detailed corrective action plan for such an exchange or wire center.
- (D) DCTUs may measure answer time on a toll center or operating unit basis as an alternative to measuring answer time in each exchange unless specifically requested by the commission.
- (3) **Local dial service.** Sufficient central office capacity and equipment must be utilized to meet the following requirements:
- (A) dial tone within three seconds on 98% of calls. For record-keeping and reporting purposes, 96% in three seconds during average busy season or busy hour complies with this requirement;
- (B) completion of 98% of calls originating and terminating within the same central office building (intraoffice calls) without encountering network congestion or blockage, or equipment irregularities;
- (C) for every switch that serves a customer, the availability factor for stored program controlled digital and analog switching facilities must be 99.99%, or the total unscheduled outage for each switch must not exceed 53 minutes per year.
- (D) For any exchange that falls below the established performance objective level, a report detailing the cause and proposed corrective action for the local dial service measures must be submitted to the commission.
- (4) **Local interoffice dial service.**
- (A) Each DCTU must provide and maintain interoffice trunks on its portion of the local exchange service network so that 97% of the interoffice local calls excluding calls between central offices in the same building are completed without encountering equipment busy conditions or equipment failures. For a DCTU's testing, record-keeping, and reporting purposes, the DCTU is not required to separate local dial service results from local interoffice dial service results unless specifically requested by the commission.
- (B) The availability factor for stored program controlled digital and analog switching and interoffice transmission facilities for end-to-end transmission must be 99.93%, or the total unscheduled outage must not exceed 365 minutes per year.
- (C) For any exchange that falls below the established performance objective level, a report detailing the cause and proposed corrective action for the local dial service measures, must be submitted to the commission.
- (5) **Direct distance dial service.** Engineering and maintenance of the trunk and related switching components in the toll network must permit 97% completion on properly dialed calls, without encountering failure because of network congestion or blockages, or equipment irregularities. For any exchange that falls below the established performance objective level, the DCTU must submit to the commission a report detailing the cause and proposed corrective action for the direct distance dial service measure, .
- (6) **Customer trouble reports.**
- (A) A DCTU that serves more than 10,000 access lines must maintain its network service in a manner that ensures the DCTU receives no more than three customer trouble reports on a company-wide basis, excluding customer premises equipment (CPE) reports, per 100 customer access lines per month on average. Performance Benchmark Applicable for Corrective Action: If the customer trouble report exceeds 3.0%, or three per 100 access lines, for a large exchange or 6.0%, or six per 100 access lines, for a small exchange for three consecutive months, the DCTU must provide a detailed corrective action plan for such an exchange or wire center. For purposes of this section, a large exchange is defined as an exchange serving 10,000 or more access

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- lines and a small exchange is defined as an exchange serving less than 10,000 access lines.
- (B) A DCTU that serves 10,000 or less access lines must maintain its network service in a manner that ensures the DCTU receives no more than six customer trouble reports on a company-wide basis, excluding CPE reports, per 100 customer access lines per month on average. Performance Benchmark Applicable for Corrective Action. If the customer trouble report exceeds 6.0%, or six per 100 access lines per exchange for three consecutive months, the DCTU must provide a detailed corrective action plan for such an exchange or wire center.
 - (C) The DCTU must provide to the customer a commitment date by which the trouble will be cleared. If a premises visit is required, the DCTU must schedule an appointment period with the customer for the morning or afternoon, not to exceed a four hour time period, on the commitment date. If the DCTU cannot keep an appointment, the DCTU must attempt to notify the customer by a telephone call and schedule a new appointment. If unable to gain access to the customer's premises during the scheduled appointment period, the DCTU representative must leave a notice at the premises advising the customer how to reschedule the work.
 - (D) At least 90% of out-of-service trouble reports on service provided by a DCTU must be cleared within eight hours, except where access to the customer's premises is required but unavailable or where interruptions are caused by a force majeure affecting large groups of customers. Performance Benchmark Applicable for Corrective Action: If the performance is below 90% in any exchange area for a period of three consecutive months, the DCTU must provide a detailed corrective action plan for such an exchange or wire center.
 - (E) Each DCTU must establish procedures to ensure the prompt investigation and correction of trouble reports so that the percentage of repeated trouble reports on residence and single line business lines does not exceed 22% of the total customer trouble reports on those lines. Performance Benchmark Applicable for Corrective Action: If repeat reports exceed 22% of the total customer trouble report in any exchange for three consecutive months, the DCTU must provide a detailed corrective action plan for such an exchange or wire center.
- (7) **Transmission requirements.** All voice-grade trunk facilities must conform to accepted transmission design factors and must be maintained to meet the following objectives when measured from line terminals of the originating central office to the line terminals of the terminating central office. A periodic report for central offices or exchanges as requested by the commission staff must be provided by the DCTU to demonstrate compliance with the following objectives.
- (A) Interoffice local exchange service calls. Excluding calls between central offices in the same building, 95% of the measurements on the network of a DCTU should have a C-message weighting between two to ten decibels loss at 1000+20 hertz and no more than 30 decibels above reference noise level.
 - (B) Direct distance dialing. Ninety-five percent of the transmission measurements should have a C-message weighting from three to 12 decibels loss at 1000+20 hertz and no more than 33 decibels above reference noise level.
 - (C) Subscriber lines. All newly constructed and rebuilt subscriber lines must be designed for a transmission loss of no more than eight decibels from the serving central office to the customer premises network interface. All subscriber lines must be maintained so that transmission loss does not exceed ten decibels. Subscriber lines must in addition be constructed and maintained so that metallic noise does not exceed a C-message weighting of 30 decibels above reference noise level on 90% of the lines.

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- Metallic noise must not exceed a C-message weighting of 35 decibels above reference noise level on any subscriber line.
- (D) Private Branch Exchange (PBX), key, and multiline trunk circuits. PBX, key, and multiline trunk circuits must be designed and maintained so that transmission loss at the subscriber station does not exceed eight decibels. If the PBX or other terminating equipment is customer-owned and, if transmission loss exceeds eight decibels, the DCTU's responsibility is limited to providing a trunk circuit with no more than five decibels loss from the central office to the point of connection with the customer's facilities.
- (E) Impulse Noise Limits. The requirements for impulse noise limits are as follows:
- (i) For switching offices, the noise level count must not exceed five pulses above the threshold in any continuous five minute period on 50% of test calls. The reference noise level threshold must be less than: 54 decibels above reference noise with C-message weighting (dBrnC) for a Crossbar switch, 59 dBrnC for a step-by-step switch, and 47 dBrnC for a electronic or digital switch.
 - (ii) For trunks, the noise level count must not exceed five pulses above the threshold in any continuous five minute period on 50% of trunks in a group. The reference noise level threshold must be less than 54 dBrnC at a zero transmission level point (dBrnC0) for voice frequency trunks, and 62 dBrnC0 for digital trunks.
 - (iii) For loop facilities, the noise level count must not exceed 15 pulses above the threshold in any continuous 15 minute period on any loop. The reference noise level threshold must be less than 59 dBrnC when measured at the central office, or referred to the central office through 1004 Hz loss.