

STATE OF NEW YORK

# Public Service Commission

William M. Flynn, Chairman

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## **NYPSC Takes Steps to Strengthen Telecommunications Network Reliability B Chairman Flynn to Create Telecommunications Reliability Advisory Council B**

Albany, 7/28/04 – The New York State Public Service Commission today voted to direct telecommunications companies offering local telecommunications services over their own landline facilities in New York State to take a number of steps to strengthen the telecommunications network throughout the state. The steps are designed to increase the number and diversity of routes over which telephone calls – including, most importantly, emergency calls – can be completed to lessen the likelihood of any local telephone switching office being isolated from the larger network at times when the system is challenged by outside events.

As part of this effort, Commission Chairman William M. Flynn announced that he will create a Telecommunications Reliability Advisory Council in New York State. The goal of the Reliability Advisory Council will be to establish a continual, productive dialogue among the public and private sectors of the telecommunications industry to ensure landline telephone companies achieve the highest level of network reliability as practicable.

"New Yorkers benefit from the finest telecommunications network in the world. The tragedy of September 11, the interruptions caused by the August 14, 2003, blackout in northeastern United States and Canada and weather-related events underscore the fact that New York's telecommunications infrastructure is a pivotal force in our state's and country's economies," Chairman William M. Flynn said. "While we believe that telephone companies generally respond well in restoring services resulting from such events, we also believe that the challenge to maintain and improve network reliability for customers is dynamic and requires constant vigilance and action. The steps we are asking telephone companies to take are designed not only to emphasize the vital importance of the network, but also to incorporate effectively the newest technologies and best practices into maintenance of the system here in New York."

Chairman Flynn commended the Department of Public Service staff for developing the network reliability proposal and all interested parties who provided public input, including customers and providers of telephone services. Chairman Flynn recognized especially New

York State Department of Banking Superintendent Diana L. Taylor and her staff for their role in facilitating an open dialogue with the financial services community on a wide range of issues related to this initiative.

"I applaud Chairman Flynn for his wisdom and foresight in this very important effort," Diana L. Taylor, Superintendent of Banks for the State of New York said. "New York is the financial capital of the world, and to make sure that it remains that way, it is critical that our communications systems are state of the art. These measures will help strengthen New York State's telecommunications system and ensure that New York remains the world's best place to do business."

The Commission today voted to approve carefully focused recommendations designed to improve telephone network reliability in the state. The recommendations were developed to help improve compliance with the Federal Communications Commission's best practices initiative, reduce concentration of customers on key facilities and eliminate single points of failure, provide route diversity for central offices, enhance customer-specific diversity arrangements, improve tracking of circuit routing, and encourage participation in the Telecommunications Service Priority restoration program. Among the key recommendations approved by the Commission are the following.

1. The Commission will ask all facilities-based local telephone companies to ensure the diversity of their network by considering the use of more fiber optic rings in their local systems, more automatic switching to an alternative office when a central office fails, and distributing customers over more switches rather than concentrating more customers on fewer, larger switches. Switches are central office devices that route calls to appropriate lines. These diversity-improvement efforts are designed to ensure that calls, especially 911 calls, have a greater chance of getting through if facilities fail or are damaged.
2. The Commission will ask all facilities-based carriers serving customers with Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) circuits – those deemed by the Federal Communications Commission's protocol to be critical to local, state, or national interests – to introduce or, alternatively, to show cause why they should not introduce a new service called "Critical Facilities Administration." The new service will allow customers with TSP circuits access to information from their local telecommunications carriers on where their circuits are routed so the customer may better manage their operations.
3. The Commission will ask all facilities-based local telephone companies to identify and report to NYDPS staff which of their local central office buildings are equipped with "dual-cable entrance facilities," as well as demonstrate that critical circuits are reasonably distributed between the two entrances where dual-cable entrances exist. A dual-cable entrance facility is a local central office that provides at least two physically separated entry points for telephone lines coming into the office that link customers to that office and then on to the extended telecommunications network to complete calls.

Having more than one entrance facility for incoming lines increases the likelihood of many customers retaining service through an entry point when an event affects the other entrance facility.

4. The Commission will ask all facilities-based telephone companies serving Manhattan to provide to NYDPS staff cost data per central office building to add a dual-cable entrance to those buildings in Manhattan housing central office switching equipment and currently lacking a dual-cable entrance facility.
5. The Commission will ask NYDPS staff to convene a collaborative of telephone companies concerning the availability and use of Verizon New York Inc.'s Switched Redirect Service by competitive local exchange carrier customers. Verizon's Switched Redirect Service is an automatic rerouting service that allows customers to redirect incoming calls (data or voice) to another telephone number on another switch (whether it be Verizon's or a competitor's). It is particularly beneficial in the event of a network failure. A similar new service, UltraForward Service, was introduced on an expedited basis by Verizon soon after September 11 to assist those affected by that catastrophe. Making Switched Redirect Service available through multiple carriers represents an alternative to duplicating network elements as a means of increasing reliability because it uses existing, in-place switching facilities to re-route calls in the event of a network failure.

"In addition to the actions approved by the Commission today, I, as Chief Executive of the Department of Public Service, will establish a Telecommunications Reliability Advisory Council in New York State," Chairman Flynn said. "This council will bring together public and private stakeholders in the telecommunications industry to establish an on-going forum for a cooperative dialogue on maintaining and improving network reliability in New York."

In creating a Telecommunications Reliability Advisory Council in New York, Chairman Flynn will work to name to the Council senior representatives of both the public and private sectors with interests in telecommunications services. The goal of establishing such a council is to ensure an industry-wide exchange of information and data on emerging state-of-the-art technologies and strategies that offer continuous strengthening of the telecommunications network in New York State.

The Commission will issue a written decision detailing today's vote. The decision in Commission Case 03-C-0922, when available, can be obtained from the Commission's Web site at <http://www.dps.state.ny.us> by accessing the Commission Documents section of the homepage. Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission orders can also be obtained from the Files Office, 14<sup>th</sup> floor, 3 Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500).