

BEFORE THE  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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In the Matter of  
NIAGARA MOHAWK POWER CORPORATION

Cases 12-E-0201 and 12-G-0202

September 2012

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Prepared Rebuttal Exhibit of:

CONSUMER ISSUES PANEL

Leonard Silverstein  
Office of Consumer Policy

Sonny Moze  
Office of Consumer Policy

OFFICE OF CONSUMER POLICY  
State of New York  
Department of Public Service  
Three Empire State Plaza  
Albany, New York 12223-1350

For the calls that are “received” by the company, the caller has several options. One option is to choose to speak to a company representative. When a caller chooses this option, the caller enters a queue to begin a waiting period until a company representative is available to take the call. Once a call enters the queue, it can take one of three routes: it will either be abandoned (the caller chooses not to wait and disconnects the call); it will be answered within 30 seconds; or it will be answered in a time period that is greater than 30 seconds. The percent of those calls answered within 30 seconds is reported to the Commission.

In order to produce an accurate picture of telephone access, the companies must report three separate measures of telephone access: 1) percent of calls answered within 30 seconds; 2) average busy-out rate; and 3) call abandonment rate. Requiring three separate measures averts the possibility of masking telephone access problems by presenting only one or two parts of the total access picture. For example, a company could report that it answers every call in 30 seconds or less. If this were the only statistic available, one might conclude that the access to the company is very good. However, if there are only a few trunk lines into this company’s call distribution system, other callers attempting to contact the company will receive a busy signal once these trunks are at capacity. The callers that get through wait 30 seconds or less for someone to answer, but a large percentage of customers cannot get through to the company; thus, telephone access is not very good at all. Therefore, it is important to look at both percent of calls answered within 30 seconds and busy-out rates to get a clearer picture of the telephone access to the EDC or NGDC.

The third measurement, call abandonment rate, indicates how many customers drop out of the queue of customers waiting to talk to a company representative. A high call abandonment rate is most likely an indication that the length of the wait to speak to a company representative is too long. Statistics on call abandonment are often inversely related to statistics measuring calls answered within 30 seconds. For the most part, the companies answering a high percent of calls within 30 seconds have low call abandonment rates, and those answering a lower percent of calls within 30 seconds have higher call abandonment rates. The 2009-11 EDC figures presented later in this report conform to the inverse relationship. In addition, the 2009-11 data reported by the NGDCs also conform to this relationship.

This report presents the EDC and NGDC statistics on telephone access in the following three charts:

- Busy-Out Rate;
- Call Abandonment Rate; and
- Percent of Calls Answered Within 30 Seconds.

### 1. Busy-Out Rate

The Commission’s regulations at § 54.153(b)(1)(ii) require that the EDCs are to report to the Commission the average busy-out rate for each call center or business office, as well as a 12-month cumulative average for the company. Similarly, § 62.33(b)(1)(ii) requires the NGDCs to report the average busy-out rate. Each regulation defines busy-out rate as the number of calls to a call center that receive a busy signal divided by the total number of calls received at a call center. For example, a company with a 10 percent average busy-out rate means that 10 percent of the customers who attempted to call the company received a busy signal (and thus did not gain access) while 90 percent of the customer calls were received by the company. If the company has more than one call center, it is to supply the busy-out rates for each center, as well as a combined statistic for the company as a whole.

The following chart presents the combined busy-out rate for each major EDC during the three year period 2009, 2010 and 2011. The second chart presents the combined busy-out rate for each major NGDC during 2009, 2010 and 2011.