



NEWS & INFORMATION

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IUB orders access charges be refunded, takes actions to prevent reoccurrence

The Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) has issued an order requiring eight telephone companies to refund unauthorized intrastate switched access charges billed to Qwest, AT&T, and Sprint. The phone companies involved are Superior Telephone Cooperative; The Farmers Telephone Company of Riceville; The Farmers & Merchants Mutual Telephone Company of Wayland; Interstate 35 Telephone Company, d/b/a Interstate Communications Company; Dixon Telephone Company; Reasnor Telephone Company, LLC; Great Lakes Communication Corp.; and Aventure Communication Technology, LLC.

The intrastate toll traffic associated with the unauthorized charges was delivered to free calling service companies (FCSCs). In its tariff compliance analysis, the IUB determined that FCSCs were not end user customers of the phone companies, as required by their intrastate access tariffs. Therefore, the phone companies erred by billing Qwest, AT&T, and Sprint as if they were end users for calls delivered to the FCSCs. The IUB ordered Qwest, AT&T, and Sprint to file their refund calculations of the unauthorized charges within 30 days.

The IUB also addressed public interest concerns relating to the conferencing traffic at issue in the docket. One of these concerns includes the fact that small phone company switched access rates are typically set at a higher rate based on a relatively low volume of traffic levels and a higher cost of providing access services in rural exchanges. However, an unreasonable result occurs when toll traffic levels are intentionally stimulated to increase intrastate access revenues. To address this situation, the IUB initiated a rule making, identified as Docket No. RMU-2009-0009, regarding charges associated with high volume intrastate access services.

Additionally, some of the toll traffic in this case involved adult content services that parents were unable to block. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has rules in place that enable parents to protect minors from indecent communications. The IUB stated it would initiate a separate rule making, modeled after the FCC regulations, to address a parent's ability to block access by minors to calling services dealing in adult content.

In addition, because Great Lakes Communication Corp. did not serve any local exchange customers, the IUB will direct the North American Numbering Plan Administrator and Pooling Administrator to commence reclamation of all telephone numbers assigned to that carrier. The other seven phone companies were directed to file reports indicating how their numbering resources are being used.

The Board decision order (Docket No. FCU-2007-0002) and the Board order initiating the high volume access services rule making are available at <https://efs.iowa.gov>.

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