

§7221. Designation of service providers

1. Initial designation of service providers. An entity that was an incumbent local exchange carrier as of January 1, 2012 shall provide provider of last resort service within its service area. [PL 2011, c. 623, Pt. A, §18 (NEW).]

2. Reassignment of service provider obligation. A service provider may petition the commission for authorization to assign its provider of last resort service obligation for a given geographic area to another voice service provider. The commission shall by rule develop a process for identifying and approving replacement service providers, but in no event may a voice service provider be designated as a replacement service provider without the express consent of the voice service provider. Before authorizing the reassignment of the provider of last resort service obligation to another voice service provider, the commission shall ensure that the voice service provider possesses the financial and technical capability to meet all provider of last resort service standards set by the commission by rule. The commission may not reassign the provider of last resort service obligation to any entity that would provide the service only as a reseller, as determined by the commission by rule. [PL 2011, c. 623, Pt. A, §18 (NEW).]

3. Modification of service obligations. Notwithstanding section 7201, subsection 7, the commission, in an adjudicatory proceeding, may relieve a service provider of the requirement that it have the capacity to maintain uninterrupted voice service during a power failure, either through the incorporation into the network or network interface devices of suitable battery backup or through electric current. The commission may grant the relief only if it finds that doing so is in the public interest. In determining that granting relief under this section is in the public interest, the commission must find that the benefits that would accrue to customers of the provider of last resort service from providing the relief would exceed the benefits to those customers of preserving the requirement. [PL 2011, c. 623, Pt. A, §18 (NEW).]

4. Removal of the provider of last resort service obligation in select municipalities. This subsection governs the removal of the obligation of a price cap ILEC to provide provider of last resort service in certain municipalities.

A. Thirty days after the effective date of this subsection a price cap ILEC is not obligated to provide provider of last resort service in the following municipalities:

- (1) Portland;
- (2) Lewiston;
- (3) Bangor;
- (4) South Portland;
- (5) Auburn;
- (6) Biddeford; and
- (7) Sanford. [PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

B. Every 6 months after the effective date of this subsection, the commission shall examine the service quality reports of a price cap ILEC under section 7225-A for the immediately preceding 2 consecutive quarters and, if the service quality requirements of section 7225-A have been met, the commission shall issue a certificate relieving the price cap ILEC of the obligation to provide provider of last resort service in 5 of the municipalities listed in this paragraph. The order in which a price cap ILEC may be relieved of the obligation to provide provider of last resort service in a municipality under this paragraph is as follows:

- (1) Scarborough;

- (2) Gorham;
- (3) Waterville;
- (4) Kennebunk;
- (5) Cape Elizabeth;
- (6) Old Orchard Beach;
- (7) Yarmouth;
- (8) Bath;
- (9) Westbrook;
- (10) Freeport;
- (11) Brewer;
- (12) Kittery;
- (13) Windham;
- (14) Brunswick; and
- (15) Augusta. [PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

C. For one year from the date a price cap ILEC is relieved of the obligation to provide provider of last resort service in a municipality in accordance with this subsection, the price cap ILEC shall continue to offer to each provider of last resort service customer in that municipality to whom it was providing the service on the date the obligation ceased a telephone service with the same rates, terms and conditions as it provides to provider of last resort service customers to whom it is obligated to provide provider of last resort service. [PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

D. Prior to the removal of the obligation to provide provider of last resort service in any municipality pursuant to this subsection, the commission shall hold a public meeting in the municipality to allow customers of the price cap ILEC to obtain information about the upcoming changes to service. [PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

E. The price cap ILEC shall give advance notice in its monthly billing statement to each customer in a municipality listed in this subsection in which the obligation to provide provider of last resort service will be removed. That notice must include the following information:

- (1) An existing customer will still be provided service for one year from the date on which the obligation to provide provider of last resort service is removed at the same rates, terms and conditions as the price cap ILEC provides to provider of last resort service customers to whom the price cap ILEC is obligated to provide provider of last resort service; and
- (2) The date, time and location of the public meeting required under paragraph D, which will be hosted by the commission in the municipality. [PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

[PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

5. Relief of provider of last resort service obligation. After a price cap ILEC has been relieved of the obligation to provide provider of last resort service in all the municipalities listed in subsection 4, the price cap ILEC may petition the commission under this subsection to be relieved of its provider of last resort service obligation in one or more additional municipalities.

A. The commission shall approve the petition if the commission finds:

- (1) With respect to a municipality, that, pursuant to the following standards, there is sufficient competition in that municipality to ensure access to affordable telephone service by households in the municipality:

(a) In addition to the price cap ILEC, there is at least one wireline-facilities-based voice network service provider that offers service to at least 95% of the households in the municipality; and

(b) One or more mobile telecommunications services providers offer, on a combined basis, mobile telecommunications services to at least 97% of the households in the municipality; and

(2) The price cap ILEC prior to filing the petition has met service quality requirements under section 7225-A in the immediately preceding 2 consecutive quarters. [PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

B. The commission shall establish by rule the sources of information and a methodology it will use to reasonably calculate the percentage of households served by wireline-facilities-based voice network service providers and mobile telecommunications services providers for purposes of making a determination under paragraph A. The commission may not require wireline-facilities-based voice network service providers and mobile telecommunications services providers to provide competitive information to the commission but may rely on other available sources for this information, including information available from the Federal Communications Commission. Competitive information about the extent of service provided by wireline-facilities-based voice network service providers and mobile telecommunications services providers used to make this determination is confidential and is not a public record under Title 1, section 402, subsection 3 and may not be disclosed to any person outside the commission. In developing the methodology under this paragraph, the commission may allow for reasonable adjustments to the information it receives if it is aware that actual availability of competitive services differs from what is reflected in the information. If the application of the commission's methodology results in a finding that the standards in paragraph A, subparagraph (1) have been met, there is a rebuttable presumption of sufficient competition in a municipality to ensure access to affordable telephone service by households in the municipality. [PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

C. Ninety days prior to filing a petition under this subsection, a price cap ILEC shall notify the commission and the Office of the Public Advocate of the price cap ILEC's intent to file a petition. The price cap ILEC shall also give advance notice of its intent to file a petition in its monthly billing statement to each customer in the municipality in which it will be seeking relief from the obligation to provide provider of last resort service.

The commission shall hold a public hearing in each affected municipality to allow customers of the price cap ILEC as well as other residents of the affected municipality to testify. The price cap ILEC shall give advance notice of the hearing to each customer in the municipality in its monthly billing statement and publish this notice in a newspaper of general circulation in that municipality. [PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

D. The commission shall issue an order granting or denying a petition within 180 days of receiving a petition under this subsection, except that the commission, at its discretion, may extend this period for up to an additional 30 days. [PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

E. For one year from the date the commission issues an order granting a price cap ILEC relief from the obligation to provide provider of last resort service in a municipality, the price cap ILEC shall continue to offer to each provider of last resort service customer in that municipality to whom it was providing the service on the date of that order a telephone service with the same rates, terms and conditions as it provides to provider of last resort service customers to whom it is obligated to provide provider of last resort service. [PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

For purposes of this subsection, "voice network service provider" has the same meaning as in section 7104.

[PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

6. Abandonment. A price cap ILEC may not discontinue, reduce or impair the service that it provides in a municipality, or part of a municipality, where it has previously served as the provider of provider of last resort service unless the commission approves the discontinuance, reduction or impairment. The commission may approve the discontinuance, reduction or impairment only if it finds that neither the present nor future public convenience and necessity will be adversely affected by such discontinuance, reduction or impairment of service.

In granting its approval under this subsection, the commission may impose such terms, conditions or requirements as in its judgment are necessary to protect the public interest. A price cap ILEC abandoning all or part of its plant, property or system or discontinuing service pursuant to authority granted by the commission under this subsection is deemed to have waived all objections to the terms, conditions or requirements imposed by the commission in its approval. A discontinuance approved under this subsection is not subject to further approval under section 1104.

[PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

7. Rules. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are major substantive rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

[PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2011, c. 623, Pt. A, §18 (NEW). PL 2015, c. 462, §3 (AMD).

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