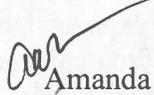


STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**Inter-Department Communication****DATE:** March 9, 2019**AT (OFFICE):** NHPUC

FROM:  Amanda Noonan, Director – Consumer Services and External Affairs
 Kath Mullholand, Director – Regulatory Innovation and Strategy Division

SUBJECT: Docket IR 19-023 Consolidated Communications Investigation into Service Quality and Repair Response
Staff Report and Recommendation

TO: Commissioners
Debra A. Howland, Executive Director

CC: David K. Wiesner, Director, Legal Division
Mary Schwarzer, Staff Attorney

On January 29, 2019, the Commission opened an investigation into Consolidated Communications' (Consolidated) service quality and response time with respect to basic service. On February 21, Staff held a technical session with Consolidated representatives. Attending were David Wiesner, Mary Schwarzer, Amanda Noonan, Rorie Patterson and Kath Mullholand for Staff, and Patrick McHugh, Esq., Robert Meehan, and Ellen Scarponi, for Consolidated.

During the investigation, Staff identified issues with: mean time to repair; Consolidated's ability to link initial customer repair reports with later repair reports related to the same individual customer line in order to identify persistent customer issues; and customer interactions with Consolidated service technicians that result in the dissemination of misleading or unhelpful information.

Consolidated provided Staff with the opportunity to review confidential exhibits regarding mean time to repair for basic service outages from the Consolidated repair ticketing system. Staff provided historic customer interaction statistics garnered from customer phone calls to the Consumer Services Division and noted a significant 84% increase in calls in 2018 over the previous year.

Consolidated acknowledged that there were significant issues last summer, peaking in August, but reported that the company has made investments in shared distribution plant as a direct result of its broadband deployment, improved staffing levels and how technicians are allocated throughout the company's footprint, made changes in how customer repair requests, or tickets, are handled, and has recentralized ticketing dispatch. The company believes these efforts have had a positive impact, and that service quality and mean time to repair will continue to improve and stabilize.

Staff reviewed Consolidated's claims carefully and believes that the current trend is in the right direction. Staff and Consolidated both acknowledge, however, that there is seasonality to the customer repair reports received by Consolidated that can affect the distribution of labor. Further, requests from electric utilities for Consolidated to set utility poles in its pole maintenance areas have been increasing. Staff expects that data developed over the next few months will allow Consolidated and Staff to evaluate the changes the company has made and the effect of those changes on service levels.

Accordingly, Staff recommends that the Commission keep the docket open through October 2019, and that a second technical session be scheduled in September to evaluate whether the adjustments the company has made continue to have a positive impact on service quality and repair response time.

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