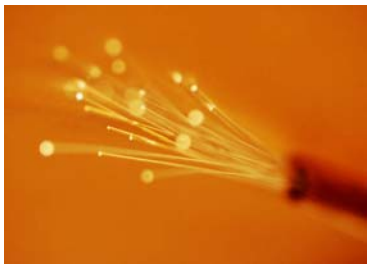
Formal Case No. 1102: Investigation into the Continued use of Verizon, DC's Copper Infrastructure

Why is there an investigation into Verizon DC's copper-to-fiber transition?



After experiencing a marked increase in the number of consumer complaints regarding Verizon DC's service, the Office of the People's Counsel (OPC) petitioned the Public Service Commission (Commission) to open an investigation into the reliability of the Company's telecommunications infrastructure. During the course of this investigation, the Office highlighted the experiences of numerous consumers who, for various reasons, were not interested in transitioning to Verizon DC's fiber network and requested that the Company continue to provide service over its copper infrastructure. These experiences, coupled with the complaints received directly by the Commission, compelled it to initiate an investigation into Verizon DC's copper-to-fiber transition. Specifically, the Commission is looking into whether, and under what circumstances, Verizon DC plans to transition customers from telecommunication services provided over its copper network to those services provided over its fiber network.

What has happened since the Commission commenced this investigation?

Initially, the Commission asked a series of questions concerning Verizon DC's future plans for its copper network, the criteria and process the Company uses to convert consumers from the copper network to the fiber network, the marketing practices it uses to induce consumers to switch to fiber, and Verizon DC's policy on the treatment of copper connections for those consumers who switch to fiber. After reviewing the Company's responses, OPC had the opportunity to submit comments to the Commission.

What is OPC position?

OPC's review of the Company's responses led it to make the following findings:

- Verizon DC's policies concerning the transition from copper-to-fiber are flawed. Consumers are complaining not only about the manner in which the transition is occurring, but also about the Company's fiber marketing practices.
- Verizon DC is failing to meet its obligation to provide adequate and reliable service as required by the D.C. Code and municipal regulations.
- Verizon DC has refused to provide OPC and the Commission with information critical to understanding the scope of the copper-to-fiber transition and its maintenance and service practices.

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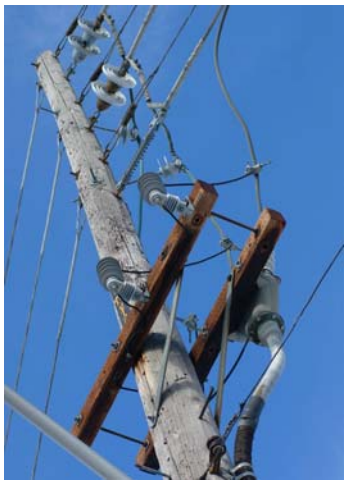
In light of these findings, OPC has asked the Commission to:

- Force Verizon DC to produce the withheld information.
- Hold an evidentiary hearing on several issues concerning the Company's copper-to-fiber transition.
- Hold community hearings that will allow Verizon DC consumers to share their experiences regarding the Company's copper repair system, copper-to-fiber transition, and marketing practices with the Public Service Commissioners.
- Establish metrics to measure the extent of this transition and the adequacy of Verizon DC's copper network. OPC has also requested the Commission impose penalties on the Company if it is fails to meet the newly proposed metrics.
- Establish a policy that prohibits Verizon DC from allowing its copper network to degrade during and after the copper-to-fiber transition.
- Enforce the Consumer Bill of Rights so that Verizon DC's marketing practices respect customer choice, are transparent, and accurately educate consumers on the benefits and drawbacks of fiber technology.
- Require Verizon DC to report on its efforts to provide telecommunication services during extended power outages. Additionally, OPC wants the Commission to establish when, and under what circumstances, the Company should be responsible for replacing the back-up battery that powers a customer's fiber terminal.



What are the next steps in this proceeding?

Currently, OPC is awaiting a decision from the Commission on whether it will adopt any of the Office's recommendations. When this occurs, consumers can be assured that OPC will alert them to how they can participate in the process and have their voices heard.