

Service Date: January 16, 1989

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE REGULATION
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MONTANA

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IN THE MATTER of The Application of) UTILITY DIVISION
GENERAL TELEPHONE OF THE NORTHWEST,)
INC. To Add Billed Number Screening) DOCKET NO. 88.6.28
To Their Current Montana Tariff.) Order No. 5396

DEFAULT ORDER
BACKGROUND AND FINDINGS

1. On June 20, 1988, General Telephone Northwest Incorporated (GTE) filed Advice No. 71 with the Montana Public Service Commission (Commission), requesting the addition of Billed Number Screening (BNS) to GTE's Montana Tariff, as a new service. BNS is a feature designed to restrict unauthorized collect and third number billings to a specific number. GTE proposed a fixed nonrecurring charge for this service for single and multi-line orders and a special rate to be set at the actual cost of service for large business users receiving multiple bills each month. GTE also proposed a customer letter to be distributed to subscribing customers by GTE which explains the service and its limitations.

2. In order for BNS to successfully block collect and third number billing calls they must be screened through a computerized data base called the Billing Validation Authority (BVA). The BVA data base is owned by AT&T and is available for screening purposes only for subscribing local exchange carriers (LECs), for calls originating and terminating within the same Local Access and Transport Area (LATA), and inter-exchange carriers (IXCs). If a collect or third number billed call originates from a LEC within the same LATA as the called party which does not subscribe to the BVA data base or an IXC which does not subscribe, BNS will not block the call. Therefore, BNS will not be 100% successful from the subscribers point of view. For 100% screening capability all inter-LATA calls must be made via a BVA subscribing

IXC or from a BVA subscribing LEC within the same LATA as the called party. These limitations were not sufficiently described by the conditions statement of the proposed tariff sheet no. 625.

3. In a letter dated August 30, 1988, the Montana Consumer Counsel (MCC) expressed his concerns regarding the conditions of BNS. MCC has no objection to the intent of the tariff, but does suggest that the language of the conditions statement be amended to clarify "... that customers are not responsible (whether or not they are BNS subscribers) for certain collect and third-party charges which are not authorized by someone with authority to bind them under applicable tariffs." MCC also recommends that The GTE proposed customer letter explaining the BNS service be clarified in the same fashion.

4. After due consideration, the Commission decided to allow interested parties an opportunity to file written comments or to request a public hearing. A Notice of Opportunity for Hearing was issued on September 22, 1988, which set a deadline of October 22, 1988 for interested parties to file a request for a hearing. No such request was filed.

5. The Commission approves the BNS tariff with the following amended conditions statement:

Incoming collect and third number billed calls from most points in the United States and many foreign countries are screened at a computerized customer data base. It is a common data base of AT&T, called Billing Validation Authority (BVA), that is utilized by most Local Exchange Carriers (LECs) to validate long distance billings for participating carriers. When the call originates from a participating carrier, within the subscriber's LATA, the collect or third number billed call is denied by the originating Operator who informs the calling party that a different billing method must be arranged. When the call originates from a nonparticipating LEC, within the same LATA, the call will go through to the called party and will be billed as requested, collect or third number. If, however, the call originates from a LATA other than the subscribers LATA and the calling party does not subscribe to AT&T as their inter-exchange carrier (IXC), the call will not be screened or blocked by the BVA data base. The success of BNS depends on the conditions of the originating point of a call. Successful restrictions will occur if the LEC within the subscriber's LATA subscribes to the BVA data base. It is the carrier at the originating point of a call within the subscriber's LATA for intra-LATA calls and the callers choice of IXC for inter-LATA and interstate calls, that determines whether BNS will be successful in restricting the call, not the carrier at the terminating end of the call (location of subscriber to BNS).

The customer remains responsible for the payment of any collect or third number billed calls that are charged when BNS is unsuccessful due to a nonparticipating carrier originating the call within the subscriber's LATA or a non-AT&T carried inter-LATA or interstate originated call, and for which they would have been responsible absent the BNS service.

6. In order to more fully inform the customer of the limitations of the BNS service, the Commission also finds that the second sentence of the fourth paragraph of the proposed customer letter should be amended to read:

“Long distance carriers other than AT&T that do not use the AT&T data base for verification may allow third party or collect calls to be completed.”

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. GTE is a public utility offering regulated telecommunications services in the State of Montana, Section 69-3-101, MCA. The Commission has the authority to supervise, regulate, and control public utilities, Section 69-3-102.

2. The Commission has provided adequate public notice and an opportunity to be heard in this proceeding, pursuant to the Montana Administrative Procedure Act and Title 69 of the Montana Code Annotated.

3. The BNS service tariffs, customer letter, condition statement, rates, and charges as amended and approved in this order, are just and reasonable.

ORDER

1. GTE Advice No. 71, proposing the new BNS service, including the service tariffs, rates, charges, condition statement, and customer letter, are hereby approved with the changes set forth in Paragraphs 5 and 6 of the above Findings.

2. This order is effective for services rendered from and after October 28, 1988.

DONE AND DATED October 28, 1988, in an open work session by a 4 to 0 vote.

BY ORDER OF THE MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

CLYDE JARVIS, Chairman

HOWARD L. ELLIS, Commissioner

TOM MONAHAN, Commissioner

DANNY OBERG, Commissioner

JOHN B. DRISCOLL, Commissioner
(John Driscoll abstained)

ATTEST:

Ann Purcell
Acting Commission Secretary

(SEAL)

NOTE: Any interested party may request that the Commission reconsider this decision. A motion to reconsider must be filed within ten (10) days. See 38.2.4806, ARM.