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US WEST TO PAY SERVICE QUALITY FINE

US West Communications will pay a \$37,250 penalty for its failure in the first quarter of 1997 to meet one of the service quality objectives agreed to under the terms of the company's settlement of the service quality lawsuit brought against the company by the state Public Service Commission in 1994.

The settlement agreement includes a service quality improvement plan under which US West must meet quarterly objectives for prompt repair and installation of service, both on a statewide and individual wire center basis. The company has met the statewide quarterly repair objectives each quarter since the plan was implemented last summer and also met the service installation objectives until now.

The objective missed by the company was to install service within three business days of the customer's request 72.36% of the time on a statewide average for the first three months of this year. US West's installation performance for that time period was 71.79% --- about half-a-percentage point under the target.

According to the settlement agreement, penalties for failure to meet the service objectives are paid by US West into a special interest-earning account. The PSC will distribute the money in the account in a manner that enhances telecommunications in US West's service territory when the service improvement plan ends in April 1998.

As a result of its investigation into its failure to meet the installation objective, US West discovered two problems with its performance reports to the PSC. The company had not been excluding Saturdays when counting the three business days allowed to install service and had improperly excluded some rural customers' service orders from the reports. When US West ran the reports again after correcting these problems, the company's results improved by about 4 percent.

US West and the PSC have agreed to use the corrected performance measurements for the remainder of the service improvement plan and to increase each of the remaining quarterly installation objectives by 4 percent.

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