



Montana Public Service Commission
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**PSC TO HOLD HEARINGS AUGUST 4-6
ON BLACKFOOT TELEPHONE CO-OP'S
EXPANDED LOCAL CALLING PROPOSALS**

The state Public Service Commission will hold public hearings in eight western Montana communities August 4-6 to obtain comments on the proposals of Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative for extended area telephone service between Blackfoot's telephone exchanges and Qwest's Missoula local calling region. In addition, Blackfoot proposes extended area service for its Avon exchange into the Qwest Helena local calling region. Extended area service expands local calling areas so that customers' phone calls within an EAS area are local, not long-distance. However, local phone rates in an EAS area must increase to recover EAS costs.

The schedule for the public hearings is as follows:

Wednesday, August 4

- St. Ignatius, 10 a.m., St. Ignatius Community Center Gym, 332 Mountain View;
- Plains, 2 p.m., City Hall Council Room, 101 West Lynch;
- Superior, 6 p.m., Courthouse, commission room, 800 River Street.

Thursday, August 5

- Seeley Lake, 10 a.m., Seeley Lake Elementary School gym;
- Hamilton, 3 p.m., Courthouse Election Room, 205 Bedford;
- Missoula, 6:30 p.m., Missoula Public Library, 301 E. Main St.

Friday, August 6

- Drummond, 10 a.m., High School Library, 108 West Edwards;
- Philipsburg, 2 p.m., Granite County Museum, 135 S. Sansome.

The Missoula hearing on August 5 is also the designated technical hearing, at which the formal participants in the proceeding will submit technical evidence.

If the EAS proposals are approved, Qwest will increase its statewide monthly EAS increment of \$2.44 by 15 cents. EAS approval will result in a wide range of increased rates for Blackfoot customers depending on location, varying between increases of approximately 33 percent to 253 percent for Blackfoot's business customers rates and 81 percent to 150 percent for Blackfoot's residential customer rates. The proposed rate changes for specific Blackfoot exchanges will be available at the scheduled hearings.

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