



PublicService Commission <psc@utah.gov>

Formal Complaint against Frontier Communications of Utah, regarding essential telephone (land line) and internet service for residents of Castle Valley, Utah.

1 message

Jayne May <ejdillon@frontiernet.net>
To: PSC@utah.gov

Sun, Mar 17, 2019 at 6:36 PM

Good morning, Fred.

Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions and explain the process of filing a formal complaint with the Utah Public Service Commission. After filing an informal complaint with the Utah Division of Public Utilities on 2/15/19, and numerous follow-up conversations with staff at Frontier Communications concerning unresolved and continuing outage issues, I now wish to submit a formal complaint against Frontier Communications of Utah.

This complaint is founded on four areas that your commission regulates, they are: Frontier's failure to provide residents of Castle Valley, UT and surrounding ranches/resorts with safe, adequate and reliable internet and essential (land line) telephone services; Frontier's lack of compliance with FCC and Utah state tariffs such as providing necessary local staff training, as well as maintenance, replacement and repair of company equipment-resulting in long-term unreliable, unsafe and inadequate daily telephone and internet service; Frontier's lack of customer notification before the "scheduled" December 15, 2018 major system replacement, or follow-up communication in response to that equipment/software failure on December 18, 2018 that resulted in continuing daily outages to customers; Frontier's billing practice of fully charging, and even increasing rates, to customers experiencing substandard utility service.

Adequate/Reliable Service - From the start, Castle Valley and surrounding ranch/resort's serious, and even unsafe outages were well-known to Frontier's regional and corporate offices who have been negligent in acting to promptly restoring safe, reliable service to a community of over 350 residents, plus resort guests. Frontier Communications Regional Area Manager, Mike Giles (435-257-8110) stated on December 18, 2018, that continuing outages were the result of faulty, incompatible hardware and software that was installed on or about December 15, 2018. (Frontier Communications of Utah was awarded a CAF Project Grant, that provided funds for contractors to update rural service, but required a completion deadline of January 1, 2019.)

Safety - On December 18, 2018, the town of Castle Valley experienced a continuous, concurrent internet and phone outage of over 10 hours that was deemed so unsafe that the Castle Valley Fire Department staged a command center at our town office so to provide community residents (who could drive) with a secure and safe essential lifeline to our sheriff's office in the event of an emergency.

Please note that in these months of continuing daily outages, some Castle Valley residents have opted to drop Frontier Communications and change to either River Canyon Network, or Emery Communications in Moab. By making a switch to improve their internet/wireless services, these residents have forfeited telephone land line service which is essential in the case of a power-outage-based emergency. To date, Frontier Communications is the only essential communications provider to Castle Valley.

Communication - To be clear about how isolated the rural community of Castle Valley is during these concurrent phone and internet outages, it is necessary for an individual to drive 25 miles to Moab, in order to try to find one of two staff members driving Frontier trucks in order to report town-wide problems. Moab Frontier Communications does not maintain staffed business office. Messages over the first two weeks of wide-spread outages were left for Mike Giles, but were not returned. The one time I was finally successful in reaching him was in early February 2019 (some 60 days into daily outages), and our call was "dropped" mid-call. Mike has yet to called me back. Overall, Frontier Communications has failed to support the Castle Valley community by providing notifications before the CAF Project replacement work began, or organized consistent information updates about this ongoing, systemic problem and plans to expedite repair.

Documentation - It was also on December 18, 2018, that Frontier Communications Regional Area Manager, Mike Giles requested that our Town Clerk notify residents to "stop" calling Frontier Communications Repair Office to report further outages because Frontier was well aware of the problem, and that it was "unnecessary" to file additional repair tickets. Prior to his communication, and if it was even possible to file these outage reports and establish a repair ticket with Frontier Customer Service, on-hold wait times were extreme and customers were not afforded any Frontier repair follow-up, nor were those repair tickets able to be found on record. Because of these factors, your investigation will lack any true or reliable data based on daily repair orders to evidence just how compromised we have been for these last

three months. The hope is that regulators are able to audit Frontier's on-site reporting equipment that track local service interruptions.

Timely, Reasonable Replacement of Faulty Equipment/Plan of Repair - Frontier has knowingly resisted authorizing the timely replacement of the problematic equipment and software by re-installing their standard (rural) equipment. Up until recently, they maintained that it is the sub-contractor's responsibility to fix the new equipment problems, and contend that Frontier's technicians are not adequately trained to do so. Local customers are well-aware that our Moab repair technicians, Randy and Mitch, are capable, experienced, accessible, concerned and professional service providers who are expected to support a large rural service area, without the benefit of reasonable training, tools, equipment, and additional staff to adequately cover the needs of the Frontier customers they serve. Late last week, Frontier finally agreed to change out equipment, but they are not sure it will work, and no deadline for re-establishing service has been set. To date, daily outages of phone and internet continue.

Rates/Credit Adjustments - Yes, Frontier Customer Relations is sincerely sorry for our "inconvenience", but to date, continues to fully charge Castle Valley residents and surrounding ranch/resort owners for monthly services we are not consistently receiving. They have yet to inform customers about any credit to our monthly statements for the lack of service these last three months and counting; in fact, we have now experienced a rate increase. It appears that Frontier's billing department functions perfectly. Our hope is that your oversight will include the financial considerations of charging for services that have not been consistently or fairly provided by a Utah utility.

In closing, the truth of the matter here is that Frontier knew that service to Castle Valley, UT was extremely compromised as of December 18, 2018 and chose to not make the immediate, necessary replacement of broken/defective/incompatible equipment in order to restore essential, reliable, safe utility service in accordance with tariffs and rules regulating their services in the state of Utah. As with the many other rural communities in states (MN, NY, CA, WV, TX, CT...) around the country that have already filed formal complaints with their own Public Service Commissions, the ongoing issues that Castle Valley, UT residents face is going to be just one more entry in a long list of faulty equipment and service issues with Frontier Communications.

I look forward to your thoughtful investigation and continuing oversight of Frontier Communications of Utah, and the resumption of safe and reliable phone and internet service to our community.

Thank you for your attention and efforts in this matter.

Sincerely,

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