

Southern Bell Proposes Lower Rate For Companies

Southern Bell today proposed a reduction in the charges long distance companies pay local telephone companies in North Carolina which, the company says, will result in lower total monthly phone bills for its customers.

Dr. Frank J. Alessio, a nationally recognized economist and consultant testifying for Southern Bell, told the North Carolina Utilities Commission that the proposed reduction for long distance companies would be offset by increased charges to Bell's residential and business customers.

Alessio introduced a study

that shows moving the charges to customers actually will lower the average customer's total bill because long distance companies will be able to reduce their rates, more than offsetting increases in local charges.

The Commission began hearings to consider access charges, competition within local telephone company calling zones and the pooling of long distance revenues by phone companies in the state.

Access charges include contributions, or subsidies, that long distance companies pay local telephone companies to help cover the costs of the dial tone line that runs from a customer's residence to the local company's central switching office. The price a customer pays for that line is less than half the cost to provide it.

Southern Bell witness David B. Denton testified that shifting access charges

to customers would increase the local portion of their monthly phone bills from 75 cents to \$2.25.

The amount would depend on whether the commission decides to add the charges over a three-year period, or all at once.

Alessio's study shows the company's residence and business customers will benefit from lower total telephone bills because of substantially reduced long distance rates and the increased value of long distance brought about by greater use at lower prices.

Alessio testified that access charges to long distance companies have nothing to do with the cost of local service.

"The cost of a customer's dial tone line, which gives him access to the telephone network, is a separate service," he said. That expense is caused by the customer's request for service and should be paid for by that customer in today's competitive market.

"The average total telephone bill for residence customers is lower with market-based carrier access charges than with the current artificially high carrier access charges," Alessio told the commission. He also

warned of the threat of bypass, in which long distance companies and private businesses use services other than local company switching offices to avoid paying access charges. Bypass will result in even higher rates, he cautioned.

Alessio's study concludes that the plan to shift access charges to customers will not cause them to give up telephone service but actually will encourage an increase in the number of residence customers since their total

phone bills will be lower. "Residence customers tend to react to their total telephone bill in deciding whether or not to continue subscribing to telephone service," he said.

PPG, General Electric Announce Joint Venture

PPG Industries and General Electric Co. announced today at a press conference in New York their intent to form a joint venture to produce and sell PPG's patented fiber glass reinforced thermoplastic laminate known as Azdel sheet.

PPG and GE will become equal partners in the new venture, to be named Azdel, Inc., according to David

Harden, PPG's Shelby fiber glass plant manager. The company headquarters and production facilities will be located at what is now PPG's Shelby Azdel production facility, which is adjacent to the fiber glass production plant.

"Initially, the new company will have about 75 employees," Harden said. "They will include the 60 current PPG employees at the Shelby Azdel facility as well as the seven employees at the Azdel department center in Troy, Mich., near Detroit, where Azdel, Inc., is expected to maintain a technology center."

Harden said the joint venture is expected to be in place by mid-August, subject to approval of PPG's board and the necessary government agencies, including the FTC. The new business will operate as an independent company with its own board of directors. PPG's Richard Zahren, who had been general manager of Azdel products, will be president of Azdel, Inc.

Harden said the joint venture will combine PPG's proprietary fiber glass and composites technology with General Electric's proprietary resin position. The new company will manufacture and sell the PPG-patented composite sheet to numerous industries, including the transportation, appliance, furniture, construction and materials handling industries.

An expansion at the Shelby facility is now under way, Harden said. Equipment to double Azdel sheet production is being started up and expected to be in full production by August.

The Shelby fiber glass plant will continue to supply fiber glass mat to the new company for producing Azdel thermoplastic composite sheet. The PPG facility for producing Azdel sheet began operations in 1979.

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