



San Juan County Council

RICK HUGHES – CHAIR

District #2

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July 22, 2014

David Danner, Chairman
Washington State UTC
1300 S. Evergreen Park Dr. SW
PO Box 47250
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

Re: Centurylink Outage – July 2, 2014

Dear Chairman Danner:

The San Juan County Council with this letter provides notice to the UTC that a county-wide communication outage occurred on July 2, 2014. During the outage, which lasted approximately ten (10) hours, the residents, visitors and businesses of San Juan County were left without a host of services including E911 dispatch service, fire alarms, credit card transactions, wireless, as well as local and incoming and outgoing long distance phone calls. In other words, it was similar in size and scope to the November 2013 outage. This was particularly unfortunate for the business community as the outage occurred on the eve of the 4th of July holiday weekend.

The catastrophic failure of CenturyLink's communication network occurred when a contractor severed a fiber optic cable near the intersection of Argyle Street and Pear Point Road on San Juan Island. While it may be expedient if not convenient for some to blame the contractor for this incident, we do not. San Juan County believes CenturyLink is culpable for the resultant outage and continued underinvestment in rural San Juan County. We believe so for the following reasons:

- (1) CenturyLink has failed to make improvements to its system to achieve redundancy. Despite promises made and testimony given at the UTC hearing on Dec. 9, 2013, the latest outage is ample evidence that all forms of communication in San Juan County can easily be eradicated by an incident of any size. CenturyLink representatives were present at the Council meeting on July 7, 2014, and at that time indicated that they had made no progress toward creating redundancy between the Islands or to the mainland. Further, that they had no sense for when they might be able to make the much discussed and needed connection.
- (2) CenturyLink failed to provide appropriate oversight of its infrastructure. Due to the location of the vault and its vital connections to San Juan and Lopez Islands, company staff should have verified the markings made by the utility locate company, located the cables as requested by the contractor, and have personnel on-site to supervise excavation activity. County staff including the Sheriff Department, OPALCO and Rock Island, Inc., were able to pin point the location of the break and make substantive progress toward preparing the cable for splicing well before CenturyLink employees were able to respond.

- (3) CenturyLink failed to provide notification of the location and extent of the outage to public officials. As San Juan County is responsible for emergency dispatch services, it is particularly vexed by the lack of communication and notice. As you might imagine, there are a lot of decisions that need to be made by the County to make sure it can provide dispatch services, and to notify the public at large what to do in the case of an emergency. The fire departments and their volunteer staff were instrumental in getting out the word including going door to door to notify residents of what to do in case of an emergency. The CenturyLink Friday Harbor office is located a half a block from the San Juan County Sheriff's Department. Instead of taking the initiative to walk a few minutes, CenturyLink staff instead locked their office to the public.
- (4) CenturyLink failed to provide notice to the business community. The poor communication infrastructure perpetrated on the San Juan Islands by CenturyLink places in jeopardy the vitality of local businesses and the economy of the Islands, not to mention the safety of its residents. The visitor experience is diminished if one cannot dependably engage in commerce to confirm or make reservations, use the ATM machine, buy gas, or shop.

San Juan County Council respectfully requests that the Utilities and Transportation Commission ("UTC") either append this latest incident to the November 2013 incident or open a new and separate investigation. Two communication outages in the last 8 months have left the County and its residents and business angered over the lack of a dependable communication system.

UTC's assistance on this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Rick Hughes
Chairman
San Juan County Council

cc: Sen. Ranker
Rep. Morris
Rep. Lytton
CenturyLink