

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending General Order R-510, Docket No. A-010648, filed 11/24/03, effective 1/1/04)

WAC 480-07-650 Petitions for enforcement of telecommunications company interconnection agreements. The purpose of this rule is to provide a speedy and enforceable means to resolve disputes when one party to an interconnection agreement contends that the other party is violating the terms of the agreement.

(1) **Petitions for enforcement.** A telecommunications company that is party to an interconnection agreement with another telecommunications company may petition under this rule for enforcement of the agreement.

(a) **What the petition must contain.** Each petition for enforcement must contain the following elements:

(i) A statement, including specific facts, demonstrating that the petitioner engaged in good faith negotiations to resolve the disagreement, and that despite those negotiations the parties failed to resolve the issue.

(ii) A copy of the provision of the interconnection agreement that the petitioner contends is not being complied with.

(iii) A description of facts demonstrating failure to comply with the agreement. One or more affidavits, declarations, or other sworn statements, made by persons having personal knowledge of the relevant facts must support the description.

(b) **How to serve the petition.** The petitioner must serve the petition for enforcement on the responding party on the same day the petition is filed with the commission. If the petitioner chooses to serve the respondent by mail or parcel delivery service, it must deliver a copy of the petition and all supporting documents by hand delivery, (~~telefacsimile~~) fax, or (~~electronic mail~~) e-mail (to the e-mail address specified by the recipient for the purpose of receiving a copy of the petition) on the same day as filed with the commission. For purposes of this section, service must be effected on:

(i) The responding party's authorized representative, attorney of record, or designated agent for service of process;

(ii) The responding party's representatives with whom the petitioner conducted the negotiations addressed in (a)(i) of this subsection; and

(iii) All parties designated in the interconnection agreement to receive notices.

(c) **Prefiling notice of petition.** The petitioner must give at least ten days' written notice to the respondent that the petitioner intends to file a petition for enforcement. The notice must identify ~~((the contract))~~ each specific provision of the agreement that the petitioner alleges was violated, and the exact behavior or failure to act that petitioner alleges violates the agreement. The written notice must be served as provided in (b) of this subsection. The petitioner must include a copy of this notice with its petition for enforcement. The written notice shall be valid for thirty days from the date of service. If the petitioner wishes to file a petition for enforcement after the thirty-day period, the petitioner must serve another notice to the respondent at least ten days prior to filing the petition.

(2) **Answering a petition.** The respondent may answer the petition. The respondent waives the opportunity to present any matter that is not raised in the answer, except that the answer may be amended under subsection (3) of this section.

(a) **Contents of the answer.** The answer to a petition for enforcement must respond to each allegation of failure to comply with the terms of the interconnection agreement, stating relevant facts. Any facts relied upon must be supported by affidavits, declarations, or other sworn statements by persons having personal knowledge of the facts.

(b) **Filing and service of the answer.** The respondent must file the answer with the commission and serve it on the petitioner within five business days after service of the petition for enforcement. Service must be accomplished so that a copy of the response to the petition for enforcement and all supporting documents reach the petitioner's attorney, or the person who signed the petition if petitioner has no attorney, on the same day the answer is filed with the commission. If the respondent chooses to serve the petitioner by mail, a copy of the petition for enforcement and all supporting documents must be delivered to the person identified above on the same day as filed with the commission.

(3) **Amendment of petition and answer.** The presiding officer may permit the responding party to amend its answer for good cause shown, and to avoid substantial prejudice to the responding party that is not caused by the fault of the responding party. The presiding officer may permit either party to amend its petition or answer to conform to the evidence presented during the proceeding. The presiding officer may refer to, but is not bound by, CR 15(b) of the Washington superior court civil rules, when determining whether to permit amendment of the petition or answer to conform to the evidence.

(4) **Prehearing conference.** The commission will conduct a prehearing conference regarding each petition for enforcement of an interconnection agreement.

(a) **Schedule; mandatory attendance.** The presiding officer will issue notice of a prehearing conference within five business days after the petition is filed. Both the petitioner and the respondent must attend the prehearing conference. The prehearing conference may be conducted by telephone.

(b) **Procedural determination.** The presiding officer will determine at the prehearing conference whether the issues raised in the petition can be determined on the pleadings, submissions, and any oral statements without further proceedings. When determining whether to schedule an oral enforcement hearing session, the presiding officer will consider the parties' preferences and the reasons they advance, the need to clarify statements by asking questions, whether the issues are largely factual, largely legal, or involve questions of fact and law, the apparent complexity of facts and issues, the need for speedy resolution, and the completeness of information presented. The presiding officer may require the parties to submit written briefs on the issues.

(c) **Means of obtaining additional information.** If the presiding officer determines that further proceedings are necessary, the presiding officer will establish a schedule for receiving additional facts or evidence and may schedule an enforcement hearing session to explore the facts and issues raised in the petition and the answer. The party filing the ((complaint)) petition or answer may file with the ((complaint)) petition or answer a request for discovery, stating the matters to be inquired into and their relationship to matters directly at issue. The presiding officer may allow limited discovery requiring only the disclosure of facts relating directly to matters at issue, and only if discovery is shown to be essential to the requesting party. The presiding officer will establish a shortened discovery schedule to comply with the timelines of this rule.

(d) **Consideration as a complaint.** If the matter at issue involves policy, technical or accounting issues that require extensive analysis or discovery, the commission may convert the proceeding to a complaint proceeding to allow adequate time and process for the demands of the proceeding.

(5) **Powers of the presiding officer; conversion of proceeding; recommended or final decision.**

(a) **Conduct of proceeding.** The presiding officer has broad discretion to conduct the proceeding in a manner that best suits the nature of the petition, including, but not limited to, converting the proceeding into a complaint proceeding under RCW 80.04.110. Matters may be appropriate for conversion when their complexity requires that they cannot be completed on the schedule provided in this rule; when the petitioner requires discovery beyond a disclosure of facts directly related to the matters at issue; when extensive policy argument or legal

briefing is required; or when participation by parties other than the petitioner and the respondent is necessary. The presiding officer may limit the record to written submissions or may schedule an enforcement hearing session. The presiding officer may limit the number of exhibits and witnesses and the time for their presentation.

(b) **Recommended decision.** The presiding officer, if other than the commissioners, will serve a recommended decision on the parties within seventy-five days of the date the petition for enforcement was filed, or twenty-one days after the last hearing session or submission, whichever is later. The recommended decision is subject to approval by the commission. If the commissioners preside over the enforcement proceeding, they may enter a final decision within the time requirements applicable to recommended decisions.

(c) **Review of the recommended decision.** Any party may file a petition for administrative review of a recommended decision within seven days after the order is entered. A party opposing review may file an answer within five days after a petition for review is filed. The commission may hear the parties' arguments ~~((or comments))~~ regarding any recommended decision on the written pleadings or during ((a hearing)) oral argument, which may, in the commission's discretion, be scheduled coincident with a regular or special open public meeting. ~~((The parties may file written comments prior to the meeting on a schedule established in the recommended decision.))~~ The commission may request commission staff to make a presentation at the ~~((meeting))~~ argument. The commission will conduct this session within ten days after the date of the recommended decision, or as soon thereafter as the commissioners' schedules permit. If no party files a petition for administrative review, the commission may adopt the recommended decision without material change. If the commission considers making a material change in a recommended order to which no petition for review has been filed, the commission must first seek the views of the parties on the issue.

(6) **Commission decision on petition for enforcement.**

(a) **Extent of commission discretion.** The commission will serve a final decision on the parties in the form of a commission order resolving the issues. The commission may adopt, modify, or reject all or part of any recommended decision.

(b) **Time of service.** The commission will enter its order on the petition for enforcement no later than ninety days after the date the petition is filed or fifteen days after the meeting at which it reviews the recommended decision, whichever is later. The commission may extend this time for lack of resources or for other good cause.

(c) **Petition for reconsideration.** The parties may petition

for reconsideration within ten days after the commission serves its order on the petition for enforcement. If a party petitions for reconsideration, the commission may request that an answer be filed. The commission may request additional comments, briefing, evidence, or argument from the parties. Filing a petition for reconsideration of the order does not stay the effect of the order. A petition for reconsideration is deemed denied unless the commission grants or denies it by written order within ten days after the date on which petition for reconsideration is filed or the date established for filing an answer or additional comments, briefing, evidence, or argument, whichever is later. The commission may alter the time for entering its order on a petition for reconsideration by notice or letter.

(d) **Failure to comply with the order.** Any party who fails to comply with the terms of the commission's final order on a petition for enforcement is subject to penalties under RCW 80.04.380 and any other penalties or sanctions as provided by law. A company against whom a penalty is assessed may challenge the penalty or the facts on which it is based, or seek mitigation of the penalty, pursuant to pertinent law and commission rules.

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WAC 480-07-700 Alternative dispute resolution. The commission supports parties' informal efforts to resolve disputes without the need for contested hearings when doing so is lawful and consistent with the public interest, and subject to approval by commission order. Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) includes any mechanism to resolve disagreements, in whole or in part, without contested hearings.

(1) **No delegation of commission authority.** The commission cannot delegate to parties the power to make final decisions in any adjudicative proceeding. The commission retains and will exercise its authority in every adjudicative proceeding to consider any proposed settlement or agreement for approval.

(2) **Forms of ADR.** Parties to a dispute that is within the commission's jurisdiction may agree to negotiate with any other parties at any time without commission oversight. The commission may direct parties to meet or consult as provided in subsection (3) of this section, or may establish or approve a collaborative process as provided in WAC 480-07-720. The commission may assign commission staff trained in ADR principles

and techniques to serve as neutral third parties (e.g., mediator or facilitator) to assist the parties. The commission may assign a settlement judge to assist the parties in appropriate circumstances. The commission may provide an arbitrator whose decision is subject to commission review in matters for which arbitration is authorized.

(3) **Settlement conference.** ~~((The commission may invite or direct the parties to confer among themselves, or with a designated person. Settlement conferences must be informal and without prejudice to the rights of the parties. Any resulting settlement or stipulation must be submitted to the commission in writing and is subject to commission approval.))~~ Settlement conferences include any discussion or other communication, in person or otherwise, intended to resolve one or more disputed issues (whether actual or anticipated) between two or more parties in an adjudicative proceeding. Settlement conferences or discussions do not include requests for information or clarification, to define whether a dispute exists or in aid of discovery. Settlement conferences must be informal and without prejudice to the rights of the parties. The procedural requirements of this section relating to settlement conferences may be waived if all parties and the commission agree.

(a) **Initial settlement conference.** The commission will set in the procedural schedule for each adjudicative proceeding the date for an initial settlement conference. Any party may attend and participate in the initial settlement conference. No party is required to attend. Parties wishing to reschedule the initial settlement conference must seek modification of the schedule by the presiding officer upon notice to all other parties.

(b) **Early initial settlement conference.** Any party that wishes to initiate settlement discussions with any other party between the filing of the docket and the initial prehearing conference must provide notice to the commission and to all other parties. The notice must specify the time and place of the early initial settlement conference and the topics to be discussed. The notice must be filed with the commission in the proceeding docket and served on other parties at least fourteen days before the date set for the conference. An early initial settlement conference must be open to all parties. For purposes of (b) of this subsection only, a party includes:

(i) The entity filing the matter leading to an expected adjudication and the respondent, if any;

(ii) The commission staff;

(iii) Public counsel;

(iv) An entity that has filed a petition to intervene in the docket, as shown on the commission's web site at the time of service of the notice; and

(v) An entity that was party to the most recent proceeding

of the same type, involving the same filing entity and respondent, if any.

(4) **ADR guidelines.** In any negotiation, the following apply unless all participants agree otherwise:

(a) The parties, as their first joint act, will consider the commission's guidelines for negotiations, set out in a policy statement adopted pursuant to RCW 34.05.230, and determine the ground rules governing the negotiation;

(b) No statement, admission, or offer of settlement made during negotiations is admissible in evidence in any formal hearing before the commission without the consent of the participants or unless necessary to address the process of the negotiations;

(c) Parties may agree that information exchanged exclusively within the context of settlement negotiations will be treated as confidential, subject to the requirements of RCW 5.60.070; and

(d) Participants in a commission-sanctioned ADR process must periodically advise any nonparticipating parties and the commission of any substantial progress made toward settlement. Participants must immediately advise the commission if a commission-sanctioned ADR process is without substantial prospects of resolving the issue or issues under discussion (i.e., if the participants agree that an impasse has been reached or an impasse is declared by any neutral third party who is assisting the participants in the ADR process).

(e) Any mediator, facilitator, or settlement judge who assists the participants in an ADR process will not participate in any adjudication, arbitration, or approval process for the same proceeding, unless all parties consent in writing.