



WHAT IS BASIC TELEPHONE SERVICE?

The Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC) sets minimum standards that all telephone companies must meet in providing basic service to their customers. The standards are designed to ensure that an adequate level of telecommunications service is available to all Colorado residents. By law, the PUC is required to review the definition of basic telephone service every three years to consider appropriate changes to the definition. After reading this information, you will have a better understanding of Colorado's basic telephone service requirements.

BACKGROUND

Until the 1990s, basic telephone service was defined as dial tone, white page listing, basic operator services and local calling. In 1991, touch tone service was included as part of basic telephone service.

In 1993, the PUC amended the definition of basic telephone service to reflect changing technology and public expectations. In addition to the standards listed above, the new rules defined basic service as a single-party line, facsimile and data transmission capability of at least 2,400 bits per second, E-911 availability, a calling area that reflects the community of interest in which the customer is located, and access to toll (long-distance) services.

In 1999, the PUC replaced the 2,400 bits per second requirement with a technical standard that requires companies to provide bandwidth that allows for two-way communications by persons using a non-voice device, such as a TTY or relay device. That requirement matches the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) definition of basic service. There is no other data speed requirement in the basic service definition.

DEFINITION REMAINS UNCHANGED

The PUC's most recent review of the basic service definition occurred in 2009. After considering comments from the public, telephone industry and consumer representatives, the PUC decided not to change the current definition of basic service. So, today, basic telephone service still includes the following:

- A single-party line.
- Voice grade access to the network.
- Touch tone service.

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- Fax and data transmission capability within the voice grade bandwidth.
- A local calling area that reflects a community of interest.
- Access to emergency services.
- Equal access to toll services.
- Customer billing as required by PUC rules.
- Access to operator services.
- White page directory listing.
- Access to directory assistance.

These are the only requirements that local telephone companies offering basic service are required to provide to all customers. Companies may offer additional services, such as higher-speed data alternatives, optional and advanced calling features, but those services are not considered part of basic telephone service.