

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COMMISSION ADVISORY AND COMPLIANCE DIVISION RESOLUTION T-14923
Telecommunications Branch June 17, 1992

R E S O L U T I O N

RESOLUTION T-14923. PACIFIC BELL (U-1001-C). REQUEST TO WITHDRAW FROM THE RESIDENCE MARKET THE OFFERING OF COMMSTAR I AND COMMSTAR FEATURES, SPEED CALLING-30 AND DIRECT CONNECTION.

BY ADVICE LETTER NO. 16198, FILED ON MARCH 5, 1992, AS SUPPLEMENTED BY ADVICE LETTER NO. 16198A ON APRIL 27, 1992, AND ADVICE LETTER NO. 16198B ON MAY 18, 1992.

SUMMARY

This Resolution authorizes Pacific Bell's (Pacific's) request to discontinue its Commstar I package and two Commstar options (Speed Calling-30 and Direct Connection) in the residence market. Pacific proposes to discontinue these optional services due to a significant decline in subscription levels and a forecasted downward or flat trend. This change will not impact the other Commstar options such as Call Waiting, Call Forwarding, Speed Calling-8 or Three-Way Calling.

The discontinued Commstar I package and the two discontinued optional Commstar features will be hereafter limited to the same customer, on the same premises, and to supersedures. Existing customers will receive written notification that they may retain the features until their service is completely disconnected or moved to another location. The offering of Speed Calling-30 will continue to be furnished to certified disabled customers, both new and existing. The notification will also inform customers that if they wish to change to an alternate service, they may do so with no installation charge. This offer to waive installation charges will be available for 90 days from the effective date of the Advice Letter, July 1, 1992.

BACKGROUND

Pacific's Commstar option, Speed Calling-30, allows customers to place calls to other telephone numbers by dialing a two digit code instead of the complete telephone number. Commstar option, Direct Connection, permits automatic connection to another telephone number without dialing that telephone number. The service is activated when the customers lifts the receiver.

Commstar I consists of a basic package which includes: Call Forwarding, Three-Way Calling, Call Hold and Touch-Tone Calling Service and two optional features (Call Waiting and Speed Calling).

The existing rates and charges for Speed Calling-30 are:

<u>Nonrecurring Charge</u>	<u>Monthly Rate</u>
\$ 5.00	\$ 5.00

The existing rates and charges for Direct Connection are:

	<u>Nonrecurring Charge</u>	<u>Monthly Rate</u>
Unshared		\$ 4.50
Installation (new)	\$10.00	
Installation (add to existing service)	\$ 5.00	

	<u>Nonrecurring Charge</u>	<u>Monthly Rate</u>
Shared		\$ 2.75
Installation (new)	\$10.00	
Installation (add to existing service)	\$ 5.00	

The current rates and charges for COMMSTAR I are:

	<u>Nonrecurring Charge</u>	<u>Monthly Rate</u>
Basic Feature Package:	\$15.00	\$ 8.20
Optional Line Features:		
Call Waiting:	\$ 5.00	\$ 3.50
Speed Calling:	\$ 5.00	\$ 5.00

Pacific states that individual Commstar Features as well as customer-provided equipment may be purchased as alternatives to the features that are being grandfathered.

Customers who choose to retain their existing features may do so until their service is completely disconnected or their service is moved to another location.

Customers who wish to change to other comparable features may choose from individual Commstar Features such as Intercom Plus, Speed Calling-8, Call Forwarding or Three-Way Calling.

PROTESTS

Notice of Pacific's Advice Letter No. 16198 was published in the Commission Calendar on March 6, 1992. A late-filed protest was received April 15, 1992, from the Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County. Pacific responded to the protest by filing Advice Letter Supplement 16198A on April 27, 1992. The protest and Pacific's response are discussed below.

DISCUSSION

Pacific established the Commstar Feature, Direct Connection on June 1, 1985 in order to allow Commstar customers to have direct access to a certain number merely by lifting the receiver. Since its introduction, the feature has not demonstrated growth in the residence market. There are 6,000,000 residence customers who have access to this feature and only 67 who currently subscribe.

Pacific established the Commstar Feature, Speed Calling-30 on June 27, 1977 in order to allow customers to dial two digits instead of seven or ten. With the introduction of customer-provided equipment offering the same capability, the demand for this feature in the residence market has declined significantly. There are 7,000,000 residence customers who have access to this feature and only 17,349 who currently subscribe.

A late-filed protest was received on April 15, 1992, from the Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County (BVIC). BVIC explains that Speed Calling-30 has been available to blind and visually impaired telephone subscribers for free, pursuant to P.U. Code Section 2881.(c). In BVIC's experience, Speed Calling is especially beneficial to the blind and visually impaired. Speed Calling enables these telephone subscribers to dial a single one- or two- number code instead of having to memorize and dial a telephone number that consists of seven or more digits. Although Speed Calling-8 would be continued by Pacific, BVIC says that many blind and visually impaired subscribers have far more than eight numbers they call regularly.

Pacific filed Supplement A to Advice Letter No. 16198 on April 27, 1992. In Advice Letter No. 16198A, Pacific states that while general demand for Speed Calling-30 has declined drastically, it was not Pacific's intention to create hardships for disabled customers. Pacific revised its Custom Calling Service tariff to continue to furnish Speed Calling-30 to certified disabled customers as defined in Schedule Cal. P.U.C. No. A5.2.3. In a discussion with CACD, Pacific explained that some blind or visually impaired subscribers must use a special piece of terminal equipment (Big Button telephone set) that by itself has no multi-number or automatic dialing capability, and is most beneficial when used in conjunction with the Central Office Speed Calling service. On May 18, 1992, Pacific filed Supplement B to Advice Letter No. 16198, requesting the effective date of the Advice Letter to be July 1, 1992, and waiving service charges as set forth in Schedule Cal. P.U.C. No. A3.1 for 90 days from the effective date of Advice Letter No. 16198. We accept Pacific's Supplemental Advice Letter Nos. 16198A and 16198B, and consider the protest of BVIC to be settled.

Pacific established Commstar I on September 27, 1985 in order to provide individual residence customers with a package of basic telephone features which include Call Forwarding, Three-Way Calling, Call Hold and Touch-Tone Calling Service as well as two optional features, Call Waiting and Speed Calling. Since 1990, Touch Tone Calling Service has been included as part of basic telephone service. The remaining features can be purchased

individually or are available on customer-provided equipment. As a result, the demand for the Commstar I service has decreased. There are 7,000,000 residence customers who have access to this service and only 4,225 who currently subscribe.

Customers who wish to change to other features will be offered a waiver of the \$5.00 nonrecurring charge for a period of 90 days after the effective date of the tariff.

Pacific has notified existing customers that it has requested the withdrawal of Commstar I and Commstar Features, Speed Calling-30 and Direct Connection. Pacific's notice explained that current customers can retain their existing service or feature throughout the life of their service, and for 90 days following the effective date of the Advice Letter, customers currently subscribing to these features will have nonrecurring charges waived if they wish to change to other Commstar Features.

FINDINGS

1. Pacific states that it has experienced a significant decline in subscription levels, and forecasts a downward or flat trend in its market for the Commstar I package and two Commstar options, Speed Calling-30 and Direct Connection.
2. Individual Commstar Features or customer-provided equipment may be purchased as alternatives to the features that Pacific proposes to discontinue.
3. All existing customers with Commstar I and the Commstar Features, Speed Calling-30 and Direct Connection, may keep their service and rate throughout the life of their service.
4. A late-filed protest raised concerns about the withdrawal of Speed Calling-30 service stated to be in demand by blind or visually impaired telephone subscribers.
5. Pacific filed Supplemental Advice Letter No. 16198A on April 27, 1992, continuing the provisioning of Speed Calling-30 to certified disabled customers, new and existing.
6. Continued provision of Speed Calling-30 service is reasonable at this time to meet the needs of blind or visually impaired telephone subscribers.
7. Pacific filed Supplemental Advice Letter No. 16198B on May 18, 1992, requesting an effective date of July 1, 1992, for Advice Letter No. 16198 and waiving service charges as set forth in Schedule Cal.P.U.C. No. A.3.1 for 90 days from the effective date of the Advice Letter for residence customers wishing to change from Custom Calling Service Direct Connection and Commstar I to individual Custom Calling Services.
8. Pacific's request to discontinue Commstar I and Commstar features, Speed Calling-30 and Direct Connection, is just and reasonable.

June 17, 1992

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Pacific Bell is authorized to discontinue its Commstar I package and two Commstar options (Speed Calling-30 and Direct Connection) in the residence market as requested in Advice Letter No. 16198, as supplemented by Advice Letter Nos. 16198A and 16198B.
2. The effective date of Advice Letter Nos. 16198, 16198A and 16198B is July 1, 1992.
3. Advice Letter Nos. 16198, 16198A and 16198B and the accompanying tariff sheets shall be marked to show that they were authorized by this Resolution and its effective date.

This Resolution is effective today.

I hereby certify that this Resolution was adopted by the Public Utilities Commission at its regular meeting on June 17, 1992. The following Commissioners approved it:



NEAL J. SHULMAN
Executive Director

DANIEL Wm. FESSLER
President
JOHN B. OHANIAN
PATRICIA M. ECKERT
NORMAN D. SHUMWAY
Commissioners