

Ordered to Service Kotzebue Phones

ANCHORAGE The Alaska Public Utilities Commission has pulled the rug out from under

North State Telephone Co. service to four Bristol Bay communities and ordered the utility

to shape up its service to Kotzebue.

The commission decision, reached after lengthy hearings over North State's telephone service to Kotzebue, Dillingham, King Salmon, Naknek and South Naknek, was released last week by PUC officials in Anchorage.

Specifically, the PUC revoked the certificate of public convenience and necessity held by North State which allowed it provide service to the Bristol Bay communities, and ordered that the utility be allowed to continue operating in Kotzebue only if it conformed with minimal standards of operation and other terms and conditions.

"In order for North State's authority to furnish telephone exchange services in Kotzebue to remain in full force and effect, it is subject to certain terms and conditions set forth by the commission, the PUC said. "The utility must file within 90 days a complete inventory of all used and useful plant in the exchange and then file a detailed study reflecting the rate base, based upon the inventory value. It must also provide the commission with information concerning its cost of providing service which justifies its existing rates," the PUC said.

The utility must also provide for Kotzebue area continuous operation and information service; adequate on-site installation and maintenance capability; cable assignment records; location markers for all buried cables, and must make restoration of 95 per cent of all interruptions in local service within 24 hours.

The commission said the local operator at Kotzebue must respond, ready to render assistance within 10 seconds; that 95

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North State . . .

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per cent of all calls receive a dial tone within three seconds and that 95 per cent of all local calls get a ring back tone or a line busy signal representing a true busy condition.

The commission did provide that North State may continue to operate its existing exchange service in the Bristol Bay communities until such time as another utility is certified, or North State may apply for recertification.

Public hearings in Dillingham "revealed gross inadequacies in telephone service received by the public in that area," the PUC said. One witness, commenting on a call to King Salmon from Naknek, said of his telephone, "It's always a surprise if it works." Persons testifying at the hearings said service in general is "very difficult . . . sometimes terrible . . . sometimes fair."