

STATE OF NEW YORK

# Public Service Commission

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13062/13-C-0197

## **VERIZON’S REQUEST TO CANCEL FIRE ISLAND PLANS REVIEWED — PSC Investigation and Public Outreach Efforts Meets Resounding Success —**

Albany, NY—09/13/13—The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today announced it would quickly review Verizon New York, Inc.’s request to suspend efforts to offer wireless Voice Link service as an alternative to basic landline service to certain customers on Fire Island where the copper wire facilities were destroyed by Superstorm Sandy.

“We are pleased, given the substance, passion and sheer number of public comments we received arguing strongly against Verizon’s plans, that Verizon decided to take a step back and reconsider how it will meet its mandated responsibility to provide safe and reliable telephone service to the residents and businesses on Fire Island,” said Commission Chair Audrey Zibelman. “It is clear that the Commission’s ongoing investigation, in tandem with our outreach and education efforts, led Verizon to rethink its plans.”

On Sept. 11, 2013, Verizon notified the Commission that it intended to abandon plans to use Voice Link as the sole source of voice service on western Fire Island, a barrier island located about five miles off the southern shore of Long Island. Instead, Verizon proposes to re-build its landline network using state-of-the-art fiber in western Fire Island. The company would continue to offer Voice Link, but only as an option.

On May 15, 2013, the Commission allowed Verizon to explore the viability of using its Voice Link service, limited to western Fire Island, solely on a temporary basis, pending the Commission’s solicitation of input from the community and a thorough staff investigation of the

use of the technology and its impact on customers. With Voice Link service, a small transmitter/receiver was to be installed at the customer's premises which is plugged into a normal electrical outlet and then into any telephone jack. Customers would have been able to use their existing telephone sets by plugging into the jack, but the technology was limited to voice-only service.

Over the summer, Department staff investigated Voice Link service on Fire Island, which included several field inspections, the issuance of numerous information requests to Verizon, and an educational forum and public statement hearing on August 24, 2013, which was attended by approximately 200 Fire Island residents and interested parties. In addition, more than 1,000 members of the public also submitted comments to the Commission.

According to its new filing, Verizon is expected to offer western Fire Island residents a standard voice service over a fiber network, as well as optional Voice Link service. Verizon will also offer one or more bundled FiOS service offerings that will include FiOS Digital Voice and broadband Internet access.

Verizon expects to complete construction of the fiber network by May of 2014. Verizon used fiber technology to restore service in lower Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens following Superstorm Sandy. The system is less susceptible to outages caused by water and storm damage. With a standard battery backup, Verizon's system is designed to remain operable to sustain voice service in the event of a commercial power outage.

Documents filed in this proceeding may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at [www.dps.ny.gov](http://www.dps.ny.gov) and entering Case Number 13-C-0197 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number." Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission orders may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.