

STATE OF NEW YORK

Public Service Commission

William M. Flynn, Chairman

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FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATELY

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CHANGES IN VOICE DIALING SERVICE EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 19, 2005

Albany, NY—2/09/05—The New York State Public Service Commission voted today to approve Verizon's request to withdraw its Voice Dialing Service for retail customers effective February 19, 2005. "Voice Dialing Service" is a network-based voice recognition service that allows customers to place telephone calls by speaking the name of the person or place they wish to call. This service has been particularly beneficial to those with physical disabilities. Voice Dialing Service is a non-basic, discretionary service that now can be replicated by equipment customers can buy from retail vendors.

Verizon's Voice Dialing Service customers received written notifications on February 5, November 2, and December 5, 2004 concerning the company's plan to withdraw the service, as well as information on available alternatives. In its request seeking Commission approval, Verizon indicated it can no longer offer the service because maintenance and service quality issues related to the lack of replacement parts and support of the manufacturer were such that it would not be viable to continue to offer the service.

"Staff worked closely with Verizon over the past year to ensure that customers were adequately informed of the pending withdrawal of Voice Dialing Service and advised of the alternatives available to them to replace this service," said Commission Chairman William M. Flynn. "With advances in technology and competition in the telecommunications industry, it is now possible to obtain an alternative to Verizon's Voice Dialing Service from retail vendors."

In terms of alternatives, there are a number of other voice-activated customer premises equipment models readily available from retail vendors with prices starting at \$50 and higher depending on the options and features. Also, many cellular telephones have the internal capability for voice dialing features.

Verizon is also offering its Voice Dialing retail customers the ability to purchase, at cost, customer premises equipment called "Vocally." Vocally is a voice-activated dialer that can easily be attached to an existing telephone. The dialer can be purchased from Verizon for \$189 plus shipping and handling. Verizon also offers an Equipment Purchase/Lease Program that will allow customers with a certified eligible disability the option to purchase Vocally at cost, and spread the payments over time on the customer's monthly phone bill. Additionally, income-eligible Lifeline customers with a certified hearing, visual, cognitive, speech or mobility impairment can receive Vocally free of charge.

Competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs) that resell Verizon's Voice Dialing Service also were notified of the pending termination of Voice Dialing Service. Verizon worked with these companies to ensure that all CLEC end users were properly notified.

The Commission will issue a written order reflecting today's vote. That order, when ready, can be obtained from the Commission's Web site at <http://www.dps.state.ny.us> by accessing the Commission Documents section of the homepage and referencing Case number 04-C-1572. Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission orders can also be obtained from its File Office, 14th floor, 3 Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500).