



Montana Public Service Commission
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**PSC TO HOLD HEARINGS JULY 29-30 AND AUGUST 5
ON EXPANDED LOCAL CALLING PROPOSALS**

The state Public Service Commission will hold public hearings in five communities July 29-30 and August 5 to obtain comments on the proposals of Triangle Telephone Cooperative and Central Montana Communications for extended area telephone service between and among the Triangle and Central telephone exchanges and Qwest's Havre and Lewistown exchanges and Great Falls local calling region. Extended area service expands local calling areas so that customers' phone calls within an EAS area are local, not long-distance. However, local phone rates in an EAS area must increase to recover EAS costs.

According to Public Service Commissioner Greg Jergeson, who will conduct the hearings, "The Montana PSC places great value in the information derived from these public hearings. I urge everyone who is interested in learning more about the EAS proposals and commenting on them to participate in the hearing nearest to you."

The schedule for the public hearings is as follows:

- Fort Belknap – Thursday, July 29, 2 p.m., Fort Belknap College;
- Havre – Thursday, July 29, 6 p.m., MSU Northern, Donaldson Commons;
- Chester – Friday, July 30, 10 a.m., Lutheran Church;
- Fort Benton – Thursday, August 5, 2 p.m., Library;
- Lewistown – Thursday, August 5, 6:30 p.m., Fergus County Courthouse, Courtroom.

The Havre hearing on July 29 is also the designated technical hearing, at which the formal participants in the proceeding such as Triangle, Central, Qwest and the Montana Consumer Counsel, will submit technical evidence.

If the EAS proposals are approved, Qwest will increase its statewide monthly EAS increment of \$2.44 by 17 cents and extend the increment to Qwest customers in the Havre and Lewistown exchanges. EAS approval will result in a wide range of increased rates for Triangle and Central customers, varying between increases of approximately 38 percent for Central/Lewistown residential and business rates to 129 percent for Triangle/Lewistown residential rates. The proposed rate changes for specific Triangle and Central exchanges will be available at the scheduled hearings.

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