

STATE OF IOWA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
UTILITIES BOARD

IN RE:  WEST IOWA TELEPHONE COMPANY, d/b/a WESTEL SYSTEMS	DOCKET NO. SPU-2015-0010
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**ORDER DOCKETING REQUEST FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION  
AND REQUESTING RESPONSE**

(Issued May 4, 2015)

On April 23, 2015, West Iowa Telephone Company, d/b/a Westel Systems (Westel), filed with the Utilities Board (Board) a request for expedited treatment of Westel's notice to discontinue local exchange service to certain end user customers. Westel states that it is in the process of converting its copper-based facilities to a full fiber network in order to reduce the operating expense of maintaining the now obsolete copper plant. Westel expects to decommission its copper facilities on May 21, 2015.

According to Westel, multiple notices have been sent to all affected customers to arrange access to customers' in-home wiring in order to complete the conversion from copper facilities to fiber. All but four customers have completed the conversion process. Westel states that it has sent written notices to each of the remaining four customers informing them of the required conversion as well as the decommission date of May 21, 2015. One customer responded but has scheduled and cancelled three appointments. The other three customers have not responded to Westel.

Westel asks the Board to approve its plan to disconnect these four customers effective May 21, 2015. Westel states that any customer who contacts Westel in a timely manner will be converted to the new facilities without interruption and without any charge to the customer.

Iowa Code § 476.20 provides that

[a] utility shall not, except in cases of emergency, discontinue, reduce, or impair service to a community, or a part of a community, except for nonpayment of account or violation of rules and regulations, unless and until permission to do so is obtained from the board.

In order to give the four customers affected by this request the opportunity to respond to Westel's notice of discontinuance, the Board will send copies of this order to the four customers identified by Westel and request that those customers contact Westel or the Board on or before May 11, 2015, with any concerns or complaints they may have regarding the conversion. Any communication with the Board should be in writing and should refer to "Docket No. SPU-2015-0010." Communications may be submitted electronically using the Board's electronic filing system, found on the Board's website at <https://efs.ioa.gov/efs/> or by mailing to the Board at 1375 East Court Avenue, Room 69, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0069.

Board rule 199 IAC 22.16(3) provides that the Board must act on a request for discontinuance of service within 30 days of the date of the request or notice; in this case on or before May 22, 2015. In order to allow sufficient time for the remaining four customers to respond to this order and allow sufficient time for a proper evaluation of Westel's request to disconnect any of its local exchange customers, the Board will suspend Westel's request and docket it for further investigation.

**IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:**

1. This order shall be served electronically on the parties to this docket and by U.S. mail to the four customers subject to discontinuance of service identified in the "Expedited Request of Intent to Discontinue Service to End User Customers" filed by West Iowa Telephone Company, d/b/a Westel Systems, on April 23, 2015.

2. If any of the four customers has comments or complaints regarding the request to discontinue service filed by West Iowa Telephone Company, d/b/a Westel Systems, on April 23, 2015, those comments may be directed to West Iowa Telephone Company, d/b/a Westel Systems, or submitted to the Board, in writing, as described in this order. All comments are due on or before May 11, 2015.

3. The request for discontinuance of service filed by West Iowa Telephone Company, d/b/a Westel Systems, on April 23, 2015, identified as Docket No. SPU-2015-0010, is suspended and docketed for further investigation.

**UTILITIES BOARD**

/s/ Geri D. Huser

/s/ Elizabeth S. Jacobs

ATTEST:

/s/ Joan Conrad  
Executive Secretary

/s/ Nick Wagner

Dated at Des Moines, Iowa, this 4<sup>th</sup> day of May 2015.