

United States Code Annotated  
Title 47. Telecommunications (Refs & Annos)  
Chapter 5. Wire or Radio Communication (Refs & Annos)  
Subchapter II. Common Carriers (Refs & Annos)  
Part II. Development of Competitive Markets (Refs & Annos)

47 U.S.C.A. § 251

§ 251. Interconnection

Effective: October 26, 1999

[Currentness](#)

**(a) General duty of telecommunications carriers**

Each telecommunications carrier has the duty--

- (1) to interconnect directly or indirectly with the facilities and equipment of other telecommunications carriers; and
- (2) not to install network features, functions, or capabilities that do not comply with the guidelines and standards established pursuant to [section 255](#) or [256](#) of this title.

**(b) Obligations of all local exchange carriers**

Each local exchange carrier has the following duties:

**(1) Resale**

The duty not to prohibit, and not to impose unreasonable or discriminatory conditions or limitations on, the resale of its telecommunications services.

**(2) Number portability**

The duty to provide, to the extent technically feasible, number portability in accordance with requirements prescribed by the Commission.

**(3) Dialing parity**

The duty to provide dialing parity to competing providers of telephone exchange service and telephone toll service, and the duty to permit all such providers to have nondiscriminatory access to telephone numbers, operator services, directory assistance, and directory listing, with no unreasonable dialing delays.

**(4) Access to rights-of-way**

The duty to afford access to the poles, ducts, conduits, and rights-of-way of such carrier to competing providers of telecommunications services on rates, terms, and conditions that are consistent with [section 224](#) of this title.

**(5) Reciprocal compensation**

The duty to establish reciprocal compensation arrangements for the transport and termination of telecommunications.

**(c) Additional obligations of incumbent local exchange carriers**

In addition to the duties contained in subsection (b), each incumbent local exchange carrier has the following duties:

**(1) Duty to negotiate**

The duty to negotiate in good faith in accordance with [section 252](#) of this title the particular terms and conditions of agreements to fulfill the duties described in paragraphs (1) through (5) of subsection (b) and this subsection. The requesting telecommunications carrier also has the duty to negotiate in good faith the terms and conditions of such agreements.

**(2) Interconnection**

The duty to provide, for the facilities and equipment of any requesting telecommunications carrier, interconnection with the local exchange carrier's network--

**(A)** for the transmission and routing of telephone exchange service and exchange access;

**(B)** at any technically feasible point within the carrier's network;

**(C)** that is at least equal in quality to that provided by the local exchange carrier to itself or to any subsidiary, affiliate, or any other party to which the carrier provides interconnection; and

**(D)** on rates, terms, and conditions that are just, reasonable, and nondiscriminatory, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the agreement and the requirements of this section and [section 252](#) of this title.

**(3) Unbundled access**

The duty to provide, to any requesting telecommunications carrier for the provision of a telecommunications service, nondiscriminatory access to network elements on an unbundled basis at any technically feasible point on rates, terms, and conditions that are just, reasonable, and nondiscriminatory in accordance with the terms and conditions of the agreement and the requirements of this section and [section 252](#) of this title. An incumbent local exchange carrier shall provide such unbundled network elements in a manner that allows requesting carriers to combine such elements in order to provide such telecommunications service.

**(4) Resale**

The duty--

(A) to offer for resale at wholesale rates any telecommunications service that the carrier provides at retail to subscribers who are not telecommunications carriers; and

(B) not to prohibit, and not to impose unreasonable or discriminatory conditions or limitations on, the resale of such telecommunications service, except that a State commission may, consistent with regulations prescribed by the Commission under this section, prohibit a reseller that obtains at wholesale rates a telecommunications service that is available at retail only to a category of subscribers from offering such service to a different category of subscribers.

**(5) Notice of changes**

The duty to provide reasonable public notice of changes in the information necessary for the transmission and routing of services using that local exchange carrier's facilities or networks, as well as of any other changes that would affect the interoperability of those facilities and networks.

**(6) Collocation**

The duty to provide, on rates, terms, and conditions that are just, reasonable, and nondiscriminatory, for physical collocation of equipment necessary for interconnection or access to unbundled network elements at the premises of the local exchange carrier, except that the carrier may provide for virtual collocation if the local exchange carrier demonstrates to the State commission that physical collocation is not practical for technical reasons or because of space limitations.

**(d) Implementation**

**(1) In general**

Within 6 months after February 8, 1996, the Commission shall complete all actions necessary to establish regulations to implement the requirements of this section.

**(2) Access standards**

In determining what network elements should be made available for purposes of subsection (c)(3), the Commission shall consider, at a minimum, whether--

(A) access to such network elements as are proprietary in nature is necessary; and

(B) the failure to provide access to such network elements would impair the ability of the telecommunications carrier seeking access to provide the services that it seeks to offer.

**(3) Preservation of State access regulations**

In prescribing and enforcing regulations to implement the requirements of this section, the Commission shall not preclude the enforcement of any regulation, order, or policy of a State commission that--

(A) establishes access and interconnection obligations of local exchange carriers;

(B) is consistent with the requirements of this section; and

(C) does not substantially prevent implementation of the requirements of this section and the purposes of this part.

**(e) Numbering administration**

**(1) Commission authority and jurisdiction**

The Commission shall create or designate one or more impartial entities to administer telecommunications numbering and to make such numbers available on an equitable basis. The Commission shall have exclusive jurisdiction over those portions of the North American Numbering Plan that pertain to the United States. Nothing in this paragraph shall preclude the Commission from delegating to State commissions or other entities all or any portion of such jurisdiction.

**(2) Costs**

The cost of establishing telecommunications numbering administration arrangements and number portability shall be borne by all telecommunications carriers on a competitively neutral basis as determined by the Commission.

**(3) Universal emergency telephone number**

The Commission and any agency or entity to which the Commission has delegated authority under this subsection shall designate 9-1-1 as the universal emergency telephone number within the United States for reporting an emergency to appropriate authorities and requesting assistance. The designation shall apply to both wireline and wireless telephone service. In making the designation, the Commission (and any such agency or entity) shall provide appropriate transition periods for areas in which 9-1-1 is not in use as an emergency telephone number on October 26, 1999.

**(f) Exemptions, suspensions, and modifications**

**(1) Exemption for certain rural telephone companies**

**(A) Exemption**

Subsection (c) of this section shall not apply to a rural telephone company until (i) such company has received a bona fide request for interconnection, services, or network elements, and (ii) the State commission determines (under subparagraph (B)) that such request is not unduly economically burdensome, is technically feasible, and is consistent with [section 254](#) of this title (other than subsections (b)(7) and (c)(1)(D) thereof).

**(B) State termination of exemption and implementation schedule**

The party making a bona fide request of a rural telephone company for interconnection, services, or network elements shall submit a notice of its request to the State commission. The State commission shall conduct an inquiry for the purpose of determining whether to terminate the exemption under subparagraph (A). Within 120 days after the State commission receives notice of the request, the State commission shall terminate the exemption if the request is not unduly economically burdensome, is technically feasible, and is consistent with [section 254](#) of this title (other than subsections (b)(7) and (c)(1)(D) thereof). Upon termination of the exemption, a State commission shall establish an implementation schedule for compliance with the request that is consistent in time and manner with Commission regulations.

**(C) Limitation on exemption**

The exemption provided by this paragraph shall not apply with respect to a request under subsection (c) from a cable operator providing video programming, and seeking to provide any telecommunications service, in the area in which the rural telephone company provides video programming. The limitation contained in this subparagraph shall not apply to a rural telephone company that is providing video programming on February 8, 1996.

**(2) Suspensions and modifications for rural carriers**

A local exchange carrier with fewer than 2 percent of the Nation's subscriber lines installed in the aggregate nationwide may petition a State commission for a suspension or modification of the application of a requirement or requirements of subsection (b) or (c) to telephone exchange service facilities specified in such petition. The State commission shall grant such petition to the extent that, and for such duration as, the State commission determines that such suspension or modification--

**(A)** is necessary--

**(i)** to avoid a significant adverse economic impact on users of telecommunications services generally;

**(ii)** to avoid imposing a requirement that is unduly economically burdensome; or

**(iii)** to avoid imposing a requirement that is technically infeasible; and

**(B)** is consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity.

The State commission shall act upon any petition filed under this paragraph within 180 days after receiving such petition. Pending such action, the State commission may suspend enforcement of the requirement or requirements to which the petition applies with respect to the petitioning carrier or carriers.

**(g) Continued enforcement of exchange access and interconnection requirements**

On and after February 8, 1996, each local exchange carrier, to the extent that it provides wireline services, shall provide exchange access, information access, and exchange services for such access to interexchange carriers and information service providers in accordance with the same equal access and nondiscriminatory interconnection restrictions and obligations (including receipt of compensation) that apply to such carrier on the date immediately preceding February 8, 1996, under any court order, consent decree, or regulation, order, or policy of the Commission, until such restrictions and obligations are explicitly superseded by regulations prescribed by the Commission after February 8, 1996. During the period beginning on February 8, 1996, and until such restrictions and obligations are so superseded, such restrictions and obligations shall be enforceable in the same manner as regulations of the Commission.

**(h) “Incumbent local exchange carrier” defined**

**(1) Definition**

For purposes of this section, the term “incumbent local exchange carrier” means, with respect to an area, the local exchange carrier that--

**(A)** on February 8, 1996, provided telephone exchange service in such area; and

**(B)(i)** on February 8, 1996, was deemed to be a member of the exchange carrier association pursuant to section 69.601(b) of the Commission's regulations ([47 C.F.R. 69.601\(b\)](#)); or

**(ii)** is a person or entity that, on or after February 8, 1996, became a successor or assign of a member described in clause (i).

**(2) Treatment of comparable carriers as incumbents**

The Commission may, by rule, provide for the treatment of a local exchange carrier (or class or category thereof) as an incumbent local exchange carrier for purposes of this section if--

**(A)** such carrier occupies a position in the market for telephone exchange service within an area that is comparable to the position occupied by a carrier described in paragraph (1);

**(B)** such carrier has substantially replaced an incumbent local exchange carrier described in paragraph (1); and

**(C)** such treatment is consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity and the purposes of this section.

**(i) Savings provision**

Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or otherwise affect the Commission's authority under [section 201](#) of this title.

**CREDIT(S)**

(June 19, 1934, c. 652, Title II, § 251, as added [Pub.L. 104-104, Title I, § 101\(a\)](#), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 61; amended [Pub.L. 106-81, § 3\(a\)](#), Oct. 26, 1999, 113 Stat. 1287.)

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