

**WAC 480-120-162 Cash and urgent payments.** (1) Each local exchange company (LEC) must establish and maintain payment agencies for receipt of cash and urgent payments. For purposes of this section, a payment agency may be a business office of the company that accepts customer payments. An urgent payment is a payment that the company requires upon threat of discontinuation of service. Each LEC must use the following criteria when determining the number of payment agencies required:

(a) Exchanges serving over seventy-five thousand access lines must have a minimum of one payment agency within the exchange for every fifty thousand access lines.

(b) Exchanges serving twenty-five thousand to seventy-five thousand access lines must have a minimum of one payment agency within the exchange.

(c) LECs that do not have exchanges that meet the criteria in (a) or (b) of this subsection must have at least one payment agency.

(2) The payment agency must clearly post and maintain regular business hours and may be supported by the same personnel as the business office or customer service center. It must not assess a charge from the applicant or customer for processing a transaction. Companies may not contract with a payment agent that charges a fee, surcharge, or any other similar charge to customers for the provided services and transactions required by subsection (1) of this section. Companies may contract with additional payment agents to process required transactions and may permit those additional agents to charge customers not more than \$1.00 for processing a transaction.

(3) A LEC may request a waiver of subsection (1) of this section. At a minimum, as a condition for waiver, the petitioner must demonstrate that applicants and customers have a reasonable opportunity to make cash and urgent payments.

(4) At least thirty days before a planned closure of any payment agency, business office, or customer service center that accepts cash and urgent payments and does not charge a fee for processing bill payments, a LEC must provide the commission, in writing, the exchange(s) and communities affected by the closing, the date of the closing, a list of other methods and locations available for making cash and urgent payments, and a list of other methods and locations for obtaining business office and customer service center services.

A LEC may not close a payment location under this subsection until alternatives for making cash and urgent payments have been provided to affected customers.

(5) When a LEC is made aware of the fact that a payment agency that does not charge a fee for processing bill payments has either closed without company knowledge or is refusing to accept company payments, it must provide alternatives for making cash and urgent payments until a replacement station has been established. The LEC must establish a replacement station within the same geographic area within sixty days. If it is unable to do so, it must advise the commission of its efforts and progress to date every thirty days thereafter until a replacement is established.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 80.01.040 and 80.04.160. WSR 03-01-065 (Docket No. UT-990146, General Order No. R-507), § 480-120-162, filed 12/12/02, effective 7/1/03.]