

and associated equipment with a franchising authority within 30 days of receiving written notification from the franchising authority that the franchising authority has been certified by the Commission to regulate rates for the basic service tier. Basic service and equipment rate schedule filings for existing rates or proposed rate increases (including increases in the baseline channel change that results from reductions in the number of channels in a tier) must use the appropriate official FCC form, a copy thereof, or a copy generated by FCC software. Failure to file on the official FCC form, a copy thereof, or a copy generated by FCC software, may result in the imposition of sanctions specified in § 76.937(d). A cable operator shall include rate cards and channel line-ups with its filing and include an explanation of any discrepancy in the figures provided in these documents and its rate filing.

[59 FR 17973, Apr. 15, 1994]

**§ 76.933 Franchising authority review of basic cable rates and equipment costs.**

(a) After a cable operator has submitted for review its existing rates for the basic service tier and associated equipment costs, or a proposed increase in these rates (including increases in the baseline channel change that results from reductions in the number of channels in a tier) under the quarterly rate adjustment system pursuant to Section 76.922(d), the existing rates will remain in effect or the proposed rates will become effective after 30 days from the date of submission; *Provided, however*, that the franchising authority may toll this 30-day deadline for an additional time by issuing a brief written order as described in paragraph (b) within 30 days of the rate submission explaining that it needs additional time to review the rates.

(b) If the franchising authority is unable to determine, based upon the material submitted by the cable operator, that the existing, or proposed rates under the quarterly adjustment system pursuant to Section 76.922(d), are within the Commission's permitted basic service tier charge or actual cost of equipment as defined in §§ 76.922 and

76.923, or if a cable operator has submitted a cost-of-service showing pursuant §§ 76.937(c) and 76.924, seeking to justify a rate above the Commission's basic service tier charge as defined in §§ 76.922 and 76.923, the franchising authority may toll the 30-day deadline in paragraph (a) of this section to request and/or consider additional information or to consider the comments from interested parties as follows:

(1) For an additional 90 days in cases not involving cost-of-service showings; or

(2) For an additional 150 days in cases involving cost-of-service showings.

(c) If a franchising authority has availed itself of the additional 90 or 150 days permitted in paragraph (b) of this section, and has taken no action within these additional time periods, then the proposed rates will go into effect at the end of the 90 or 150 day periods, or existing rates will remain in effect at such times, subject to refunds if the franchising authority subsequently issues a written decision disapproving any portion of such rates: *Provided, however*, That in order to order refunds, a franchising authority must have issued a brief written order to the cable operator by the end of the 90 or 150-day period permitted in paragraph (b) of this section directing the operator to keep an accurate account of all amounts received by reason of the rate in issue and on whose behalf such amounts were paid.

(d) A franchising authority may request, pursuant to a petition for special relief under § 76.7, that the Commission examine a cable operator's cost-of-service showing, submitted to the franchising authority as justification of basic tier rates, within 30 days of receipt of a cost-of-service showing. In its petition, the franchising authority shall document its reasons for seeking Commission assistance. The franchising authority shall issue an order stating that it is seeking Commission assistance and serve a copy before the 30-day deadline on the cable operator submitting the cost showing. The cable operator shall deliver a copy of the cost showing, together with all relevant attachments, to the Commission within 15 days of receipt of the local authority's notice to seek Commission

assistance. The Commission shall notify the local franchising authority and the cable operator of its ruling and of the basic tier rate, as established by the Commission. The rate shall take effect upon implementation by the franchising authority of such ruling and refund liability shall be governed thereon. The Commission's ruling shall be binding on the franchising authority and the cable operator. A cable operator or franchising authority may seek reconsideration of the ruling pursuant to § 1.106(a)(1) of this chapter or review by the Commission pursuant to § 1.115(a) of this chapter.

(e) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a) through (d) of this section, when the franchising authority is regulating basic service tier rates, a cable operator that sets its rates pursuant to the quarterly rate adjustment system pursuant to § 76.922(d) may increase its rates for basic service to reflect the imposition of, or increase in, franchise fees or Commission cable television system regulatory fees imposed pursuant to 47 U.S.C. 159. For the purposes of paragraphs (a) through (c) of this section, the increased rate attributable to Commission regulatory fees or franchise fees shall be treated as an "existing rate", subject to subsequent review and refund if the franchising authority determines that the increase in basic tier rates exceeds the increase in regulatory fees or in franchise fees allocable to the basic tier. This determination shall be appealable to the Commission pursuant to § 76.944. When the Commission is regulating basic service tier rates pursuant to § 76.945 or cable programming service rates pursuant to § 76.960, an increase in those rates resulting from franchise fees or Commission regulatory fees shall be reviewed by the Commission pursuant to the mechanisms set forth in § 76.945. A cable operator must adjust its rates to reflect decreases in franchise fees or Commission regulatory fees within the periods set forth in § 76.922(d)(3)(i),(iii).

(f) For an operator that sets its rates pursuant to the quarterly rate adjustment system pursuant to Section 76.922(d), cable television system regulatory fees assessed by the Commission pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 159 shall be recovered in monthly installments dur-

ing the fiscal year following the year for which the payment was imposed. Payments shall be collected in equal monthly installments, except that for so many months as may be necessary to avoid fractional payments, an additional \$0.01 payment per month may be collected. All such additional payments shall be collected in the last month or months of the fiscal year, so that once collections of such payments begin there shall be no month remaining in the year in which the operator is not entitled to such an additional payment. Operators may not assess interest. Operators may provide notice of the entire fiscal year's regulatory fee pass-through in a single notice.

(g) A cable operator that submits for review a proposed change in its existing rates for the basic service tier and associated equipment costs using the annual filing system pursuant to Section 76.922(e) shall do so no later than 90 days from the effective date of the proposed rates. The franchising authority will have 90 days from the date of the filing to review it. However, if the franchising authority or its designee concludes that the operator has submitted a facially incomplete filing, the franchising authority's deadline for issuing a decision, the date on which rates may go into effect if no decision is issued, and the period for which refunds are payable will be tolled while the franchising authority is waiting for this information, provided that, in order to toll these effective dates, the franchising authority or its designee must notify the operator of the incomplete filing within 45 days of the date the filing is made.

(1) If there is a material change in an operator's circumstances during the 90-day review period and the change affects the operator's rate change filing, the operator may file an amendment to its Form 1240 prior to the end of the 90-day review period. If the operator files such an amendment, the franchising authority will have at least 30 days to review the filing. Therefore, if the amendment is filed more than 60 days after the operator made its initial filing, the operator's proposed rate change may not go into effect any earlier than 30 days after the filing of its amendment. However, if the operator

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files its amended application on or prior to the sixtieth day of the 90-day review period, the operator may implement its proposed rate adjustment, as modified by the amendment, 90 days after its initial filing.

(2) If a franchising authority has taken no action within the 90-day review period, then the proposed rates may go into effect at the end of the review period, subject to a prospective rate reduction and refund if the franchising authority subsequently issues a written decision disapproving any portion of such rates, *provided, however*, that in order to order a prospective rate reduction and refund, if an operator inquires as to whether the franchising authority intends to issue a rate order after the initial review period, the franchising authority or its designee must notify the operator of its intent in this regard within 15 days of the operator's inquiry. If a proposed rate goes into effect before the franchising authority issues its rate order, the franchising authority will have 12 months from the date the operator filed for the rate adjustment to issue its rate order. In the event that the franchising authority does not act within this 12-month period, it may not at a later date order a refund or a prospective rate reduction with respect to the rate filing.

(3) At the time an operator files its rates with the franchising authority, the operator may give customers notice of the proposed rate changes. Such notice should state that the proposed rate change is subject to approval by the franchising authority. If the operator is only permitted a smaller increase than was provided for in the notice, the operator must provide an explanation to subscribers on the bill in which the rate adjustment is implemented. If the operator is not permitted to implement any of the rate increase that was provided for in the notice, the operator must provide an explanation to subscribers within 60 days of the date of the franchising authority's decision. Additional advance notice is only required in the unlikely event that the rate exceeds the previously noticed rate.

(4) If an operator files for a rate adjustment under Section

76.922(e)(2)(iii)(B) for the addition of required channels to the basic service tier that the operator is required by federal or local law to carry, or, if a single-tier operator files for a rate adjustment based on a mid-year channel addition allowed under Section 76.922(e)(2)(iii)(C), the franchising authority has 60 days to review the requested rate. The proposed rate shall take effect at the end of this 60-day period unless the franchising authority rejects the proposed rate as unreasonable. In order to order refunds and prospective rate reductions, the franchising authority shall be subject to the requirements described in paragraph (g)(1) of this section.

(5) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a) through (f) of this section, when the franchising authority is regulating basic service tier rates, a cable operator may increase its rates for basic service to reflect the imposition of, or increase in, franchise fees. The increased rate attributable to Commission regulatory fees or franchise fees shall be subject to subsequent review and refund if the franchising authority determines that the increase in basic tier rates exceeds the increase in regulatory fees or in franchise fees allocable to the basic tier. This determination shall be appealable to the Commission pursuant to § 76.944. When the Commission is regulating basic service tier rates pursuant to § 76.945 or cable programming service rates pursuant to § 76.960, an increase in those rates resulting from franchise fees or Commission regulatory fees shall be reviewed by the Commission pursuant to the mechanisms set forth in § 76.945.

(h) If an operator files an FCC Form 1205 for the purpose of setting the rate for a new type of equipment under Section 76.923(o), the franchising authority has 60 days to review the requested rate. The proposed rate shall take effect at the end of this 60-day period unless the franchising authority rejects the proposed rate as unreasonable.

(1) If the operator's most recent rate filing was based on the system that enables them to file up to once per quarter found at Section 76.922(d), the franchising authority must issue an accounting order before the end of the 60-

day period in order to order refunds and prospective rate reductions.

(2) If the operator's most recent rate filing was based on the annual rate system at Section 76.922(e), in order to order refunds and prospective rate reductions, the franchising authority shall be subject to the requirements described in paragraph (g)(1) of this section.

[58 FR 29753, May 21, 1993, as amended at 59 FR 17973, Apr. 15, 1994; 59 FR 53115, Oct. 21, 1994; 60 FR 52119, Oct. 5, 1995; 61 FR 18978, Apr. 30, 1996]

**§ 76.934 Small systems and small cable companies.**

(a) For purposes of rules governing the reasonableness of rates charged by small systems, the size of a system or company shall be determined by reference to its size as of the date the system files with its franchising authority or the Commission the documentation necessary to qualify for the relief sought or, at the option of the company, by reference to system or company size as of the effective date of this paragraph. Where relief is dependent upon the size of both the system and the company, the operator must measure the size of both the system and the company as of the same date. A small system shall be considered affiliated with a cable company if the company holds a 20 percent or greater equity interest in the system or exercises de jure control over the system.

(b) A franchising authority that has been certified, pursuant to § 76.910, to regulate rates for basic service and associated equipment may permit a small system as defined in § 76.901 to certify that the small system's rates for basic service and associated equipment comply with § 76.922, the Commission's substantive rate regulations.

(c) Initial regulation of small systems:

(1) If certified by the Commission, a local franchising authority may provide an initial notice of regulation to a small system, as defined by § 76.901(c), on May 15, 1994. Any initial notice of regulation issued by a certified local franchising authority prior to May 15, 1994 shall be considered as having been issued on May 15, 1994.

(2) The Commission will accept complaints concerning the rates for cable programming service tiers provided by small systems on or after May 15, 1994. Any complaints filed with the Commission about the rates for a cable programming service tier provided by a small system prior to May 15, 1994 shall be considered as having been filed on May 15, 1994.

(3) A small system that receives an initial notice of regulation from its local franchising authority, or a complaint filed with the Commission for its cable programming service tier, must respond within the time periods prescribed in §§ 76.930 and 76.956.

(d) Statutory period for filing initial complaint: A complaint concerning a rate for cable programming service or associated equipment provided by a small system that was in effect on May 15, 1994 must be filed within 180 days from May 15, 1994.

(e) Petitions for extension of time: Small systems may obtain an extension of time to establish compliance with rate regulations provided they can demonstrate that timely compliance would result in severe economic hardship. Requests for extension of time should be addressed to the local franchising authority concerning basic service and equipment rates and to the Commission concerning rates for a cable programming service tier and associated equipment. The filing of a request for an extension of time to comply with the rate regulations will not toll the effective date of rate regulation for small systems or alter refund liability for rates that exceed permitted levels after May 15, 1994.

(f) *Small Systems Owned by Small Cable Companies.* Small systems owned by small cable companies shall have 90 days from their initial date of regulation on a tier to bring their rates for that tier into compliance with the requirements of Sections 76.922 and 76.923. Such systems shall have sixty days from the initial date of regulation to file FCC Forms 1200, 1205, 1210, 1211, 1215, 1220, 1225, 1230, and 1240 and any similar forms as appropriate. Rates established during the 90-day period shall not be subject to prior approval by