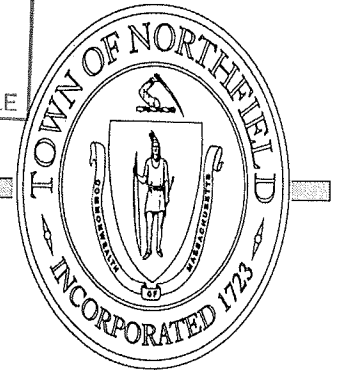
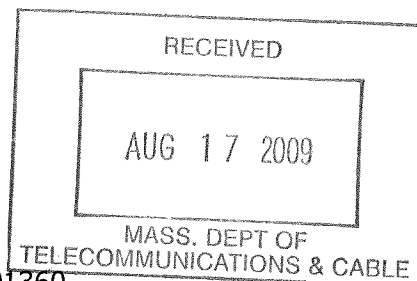


**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD
SELECTBOARD**

69 Main Street, Northfield, Massachusetts 01360

Phone: (413) 498-2901 Fax: (413) 498-5103 www.northfield.ma.us



August 13, 2009

Catrice C. Williams
Secretary of the Department of Telecommunications
Two South Station
4th Floor
Boston, MA 02110

RE: Northfield- Concerns about Verizon Telephone Service

Dear Ms. Williams:

We write this in response to your request for testimony about Verizon's telephone service in western Massachusetts.

The Northfield Selectboard is concerned about telephone outages in September 2002 and July 2009 that resulted in outages in regular 911 services. Northfield is a rural community of 3,000 residents located in the northeast region of Franklin County, abutting New Hampshire. The community is the only town along the Connecticut River to be located on both sides of the river. The community is located in the Emergency Planning Zone (EPZ) for the Entergy Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant.

Northfield has 2 full-time police officers, 8 part-time police officers and 40 on-call fire and EMS personnel. Residents who need police, fire or medical services dial 911. Calls are answered and dispatched to the appropriate Northfield personnel by Shelburne Control, the regional State Police dispatch center located in Shelburne, MA. Disruption of 911 services as occurred in 2002 and 2009 can have dire consequences for residents.

We are particularly concerned about the disruption to 911 services that occurred on July 8, 2009. On that day from approximately 5:00 am - 3:45 pm most of Northfield was an island without incoming or outgoing telephone service. Only calls within the 498 exchange could be completed. During this time 911 emergency calls could not reach

Shelburne Control, our primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), nor any failover PSAP. 911 calls were diverted to the destination of last resort, the Northfield Fire Station. On-call fire-fighters relayed calls to Shelburne Control via radio.

Between 5:00 am and 6:30 am the Fire Station was not staffed because the Town was not notified of the telephone outage and resulting 911 redirection. Thus, there was no effective 911 service during that time. Emergency personnel became aware of the disruption in 911 service by happenstance when a resident, a former 911 dispatcher, noticed that there was a telephone service outage and immediately called Shelburne Control by cellular phone and asked them to test the system. When Shelburne Control dispatchers confirmed that the regular system did not work they contacted Fire Chief Floyd Dunnell who asked that Shelburne Control dispatch on-call fire fighters to the Northfield Fire Station.

At approximately 4:00 pm on that day Ellen Cummings, Regional Director, Verizon External Affairs, called Susan Draves, the Town's Administrative Assistant, to report that Verizon telephone service had been fully restored in Northfield. When asked to explain what caused the telephone outage Ms. Cummings reported that at 5:00 am on August 8th a weather event took down a tree on Main Road in Gill. The tree went into poles with utility lines on them which caused a fire on the primary electric lines. The wires also caught on fire. According to Ms. Cummings, the wire was a copper and wire cable that feeds the switch into Northfield from Verizon's Central Office.

When Ms. Draves asked about the status of 911 calls Ms. Cummings said that she was told that 911 had been operational all day. She explained that circuits like E-911 have a "self-healing" monitoring system that automatically looks for a different route and goes to it.

Following the conversation with Ms. Cummings, Ms. Draves contacted Shelburne Control to ask if 911 had been functional all day. Ms. Draves was told that from approximately 6:30 am – 3:45 pm, all Northfield 911 calls were routed to the Northfield Fire Station where they were relayed to Shelburne Control via radio by the fire fighters.

Ms. Draves emailed this information to Ms. Cummings asking that Verizon explain to the Northfield Selectboard how the "self-healing" service works for the Town. To date the Town has received no reply.

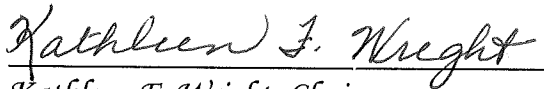
The Selectboard is concerned about Verizon's back up system for 911 calls in Northfield and Verizon's lack of response to this important issue.

Specific concerns include:

- Verizon did not notify the Town that the regular 911 system did not work. Why? It is clear that Verizon cannot notify every customer of such a failure but surely the company can contact the Town or Shelburne Control. Without this notification emergency 911 calls are routed to the unstaffed Northfield Fire Station.
 - It took Verizon almost 11 hours to repair the telephone system. Why? Did Verizon allocate sufficient personnel to get the problem fixed as soon as possible?
 - With a very tight Town budget the Fire Department was forced to pay on-call fire fighters to staff the fire station for 11 hours to relay 911 calls.
1. We ask that you order Verizon to provide a full explanation of what the problem was, their actions to get it fixed and the reason for the 11 hour delay.
 2. We ask that you order Verizon to develop a back up plan for 911 services in Northfield that involves notification to Shelburne Control.
 2. We ask that you order Verizon to reimburse the Town for the costs it incurred to keep 911 services operable.

If you have questions or need additional information please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Kathleen F. Wright, Chairman

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SJD/sjd

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