

Bell blames FCC for cuts in service

Michigan Bell Telephone Co. wants to ease the effects of changes in federal policy which will cause "major disruptions" in the way customers do business with the utility starting Jan. 1.

Bell is urging customers to "call first" before visiting company offices, said William J. Schlager, Michigan Bell vice president.

Schlager detailed some of the change brought about by implementation of new federal policy:

- Customers no longer will be able to transact Michigan Bell business at 17 major shopping mall PhoneCenter Stores because the stores will be transferred to American Bell — a newly formed Bell System subsidiary.
- Customers will not be able to pick up telephones or exchange them at customer service centers without making prior arrangements by phone.
- Michigan Bell will be able to provide phones only from its inventory and

will not be able to replenish its stock in 1983.

THE CHANGES, Schlager said, are the result of a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) order mandating a new policy of competition in the telecommunications industry.

"Because the FCC has said that the Bell System can sell telephone equipment only through a separate subsidiary, Michigan Bell literally will be a phone company without phones for new service when our inventory is gone," he said. "After that, customers will have to get their phones from other suppliers."

Customers who are used to doing business at company offices in person will feel the changes most, Schlager said. This year, Michigan Bell has handled more than 900,000 face-to-face service contacts in its customer offices around the state.

"Since we won't be providing the same kinds of walk-in services any more, we're urging customers to call us first to avoid possible frustration and the inconvenience of wasted trips," he said.

CUSTOMERS WANTING to order equipment, service or who have questions about their bills, should call the service representative number printed at the bottom of their phone bills.

For repair service, dial one of two centralized repair numbers: 221-3121 for residence customers and 221-3131 for business customers.

Schlager stressed that customers wanting phones from Michigan Bell can order them by telephone only as long as the inventory lasts.

Customers can arrange to have new phones delivered by private parcel delivery service directly to their homes at an additional charge, he said, or they can pick up their phones at prearranged times and places.

Phone pickups will be available at 58 Michigan Bell Service Centers, 94 Fotomat stores and 186 service agents such as banks, pharmacies and supermarkets across the state.

ALL SERVICE centers will accept advance payments and service deposits. Customers can continue to pay bills by mail, at centers which have accepted bill payments in the past, and at authorized collection agents.

Also after the first of the year, Michigan Bell no longer will provide Dial-It services such as SportsPhone (a service mark of Phone Programs, Inc.) and Soap Scoops. Similar services may be offered by other suppliers at that time.

Customers with questions about the changes should call Bell's Information center toll-free at 800-555-5000 between 8 a.m. and 11 p.m. weekdays and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays.

Wayne contract cuts entry pay for attorneys

The Wayne County Board of Commissioners recently approved several labor contracts and appropriated money to help reinstate the sheriff's marine division.

The board approved a new bar association contract for 138 attorneys. It established lower entry-level salaries, froze cost-of-living allowances, eliminated supplemental workers' compensation benefits and extended the promotional time period from 11 to 20 years.

Robert Sheedy, a spokesman for the

labor board, said that if County Executive-elect William Lucas adheres to the new policies for entry-level hiring and promotions, county costs will be significantly reduced over time.

COLA benefits, amounting to \$3.55 an hour, will be rolled into attorneys' salaries July 1 and will amount to \$8,988 each. Attorneys will also get a 5 percent increase per year for a maximum of four years and a \$1,200 differential between position levels.

Immediate cost to the county is estimated at \$470,000, according to Edward Bobowski, county fiscal advisor.

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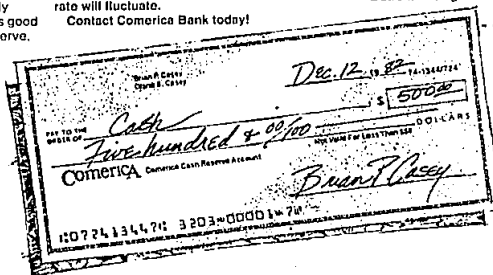
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