

PUC will allow Bell to up dial tone rates

By ROY SNYDER
Associated Press Writer

HARRISBURG — The Public Utility Commission indicated Thursday that it would allow Bell of Pennsylvania to increase the cost of local dial tone service for residential and business telephone customers.

The PUC, in a non-binding poll, appeared to agree with Bell's argument that the cost of "dial-tone" service should be raised to more accurately reflect the cost of providing the service.

A PUC spokesman said the dial-tone charge is only for hooking into the telephone system and doesn't include the cost of making calls.

"The PUC rightly recognizes the need to increase dial-tone line rates," said Bell Vice President James Breneman. "But even with this increase, the price customers pay will be far below what it costs us to provide the service."

Commissioners announced their stands on various issues involving Bell's proposed \$238.6 annual rate increase. The poll will be used to let the PUC staff draft an order reflecting the majority view of the commission.

Last week, the commissioners poked on other issues in the case. Preliminary estimates show they will allow only a total increase of between \$28 million to \$35 million, according to staff members.

The PUC also said Thursday that it would likely reject Bell's proposal to charge those customers without unlimited calling service by the length of their calls.

"It is clear that the PUC has denied timing for local calls, and this is disappointing," said Breneman. "It is clear to us that those who make the most use of the public telephone network ought to bear more of the cost of the network."

The commission also indicated it would lift a restriction, imposed in Bell's last rate case, that prohibited new customers from having two-party lines and old customers from switching to party lines.

Commission allows mail-order drugs for aged

By MAUD S. BEELMAN
Associated Press Writer

HARRISBURG — The state's regulatory review commission yesterday cleared the way for elderly people to receive mail-order prescription drugs as part of Pennsylvania's low-cost medical program for the aged.

After two hours of hearings on whether the rules were intended to apply to local and mail-order pharmacies equally, the Independent Regulatory Review Commission unanimously approved the expansion of the Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly.

F. Nicholas Willard, director of the American Association of Retired Persons' pharmacy service, said the regulations put a burden on mail-order pharmacies that was not shared by local pharmacies doing over-the-counter business.

ries while local pharmacies are not required to do so.

"I sympathize with you in some of your observations, but you haven't told me anything that's wrong with these regulations," Commissioner John McGinley told Willard.

Commissioners rejected arguments that all pharmacies in the PACE program were covered by mail-order regulations. But McGinley suggested that the Department of Aging review its policies regarding local pharmacies to see if they could benefit from some of the mail-order regulations.

Rep. Peter Wambach, D-Dauphin, a member of the House Consumer Affairs committee, said lawmakers wanted to place the same burden of patient verification and history on local pharmacies that also do a mail-order business.

Linda Smith, counsel for Aging, denied that mail-order pharmacies were being unduly burdened.

dened. All PACE pharmacies, regardless of the method of delivery, must identify patients through a signed Universal Claim Form.

Aside from the patient history file, the only other major difference was that mail-orders were required to fill prescriptions within 48 hours of the order, she said.

"So I really can't understand why there's such a disagreement about delivery," Smith said. "I think Mr. Willard is hung up on a matter of principle. They just don't like the distinctions that are being drawn."

Smith disputed that it was burdensome to require mail-order pharmacies to maintain patient histories, saying "that's the state of the art" in the mail-order industry, as was the 48-hour turnaround time. She said the histories were necessary to make up for the "deficit" of no personal contact between the pharmacist and patient.

New Greenpeace nears French nuclear test site

PAPEETE, Tahiti (AP) — The new Greenpeace flagship is expected to arrive off France's Mururoa Atoll nuclear testing site tomorrow on a protest mission the Rainbow Warrior was preparing to lead when French secret agents sank it.

The new flagship, named the Greenpeace, became the international environmentalist organization's flagship after the Rainbow Warrior was sunk by two explosive charges July 10 at its berth in Auckland, New Zealand. A crew member from Holland was killed in the bombing.

Four other protest vessels were bound for Mururoa: the ketch Vega, with five people aboard; the Breeze and Alliance, each with seven crew, and the Varagian, which left New Zealand after the others and is weeks away.

French naval officials said the 1,600-ton converted tugboat was in the area of the Marquesas Islands on Wednesday and turned toward Mururoa yesterday.

The Vega was said to be 30 to 40 miles from Mururoa, the Breeze 300 miles out and expected to arrive over the weekend, and the Alliance about 650 miles away.

Bernard Gerard, France's high commission for French Polynesia, said the navy would intervene if necessary to keep the protesters away from the testing site. Greenpeace spokesmen have said the flotilla will take a position just outside French waters.

The French frigate Baly is shadowing the Greenpeace and four other navy ships are in the area, including a light transport.

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Concorde swoops into Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A need-led Concorde landed in Philadelphia International Airport for the first time yesterday, amid hopes by officials that the supersonic airliner will begin making stops at least annually.

The 9-year-old plane, which can fly at twice the speed of sound, arrived from London in wind and drizzle as part of British Airways' charter arrangement with Cunard Line Ltd.

The plane drew dozens of spectators to the overseas terminal, and British Airways obliged them with peeks inside the sleek, white plane with blue and red trim.

Some of the 100 passengers will return to London by sea aboard the Queen Elizabeth II luxury liner.

Another Concorde flight will arrive in November as part of the Concorde-QE 2 package, Cunard spokeswoman Dale McCullough said. Cunard hopes to begin scheduling one or two such charters each year between Philadelphia and London, she said.

Yesterday's visit was the first Concorde stop here since commercial Concorde travel began in January 1976.

After the Concorde landed, nose high and its long, fin-like wings seemingly sweeping the runway, a man dressed as the Phillie Phanatic, mascot to Philadelphia's major-league baseball team, bounded down steps from the plane.

A technological marvel that took years to become profitable for British Airways and Air France, each of which owns seven Concorde, the plane makes twice-daily trans-Atlantic trips to New York and three trips each week to Washington and Miami.

Passengers pay extra for the speed, with a usual fare of about \$2,500 one way from New York to London, compared with \$1,000 in first class on other British Airways flights.

One fellow who is sold on the Concorde is the pilot who took it out of Philadelphia, Capt. John Hutchinson said he has flown about 70 different kinds of planes in 30 years and puts the Concorde at the top.

Passengers can sip their champagne or gin and tonic traveling 1,350 mph at 35,000 feet, he said, and see "nothing but a ripple on the surface of their drink."

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