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Xcel Energy Information Request No. 1
Docket No.: E002/M-20-406
Response To: Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
Requestor: Tera Dornfeld
Date Received: September 16, 2020

Question:

Minnesota Administrative Rules Chapter 7826, Part 7826.1700: Reporting Call Center Response Times states that, “The annual service quality report must include a detailed report on call center response times, including calls to the business office.” More, Chapter 7826.1200: Call Center Response Time Subpart 1 states that, “On an annual basis, utilities shall answer 80 percent of calls made to the business office during regular business hours within 20 seconds. "Answer" means that an operator or representative is ready to render assistance or accept the information to handle the call. Acknowledging that the customer is waiting on the line and will be served in turn is not an answer. If the utility uses an automated call-processing system, the 20-second period begins when the customer has selected a menu option to speak to a live operator or representative.” Subpart 2 refers to calls regarding service interruptions and states, “On an annual basis, utilities shall answer 80 percent of calls directed to the telephone number for reporting service interruptions within 20 seconds.”

In Xcel Energy’s April 1, 2020 2019 Annual Report and Petition Service Quality Performance and Proposed Reliability Measures, p51-52, the Company reports that, “our Call Centers are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and our IVR is used in the same manner across this time period, therefore, these were our “business hours.” Our performance includes call and service level information on a 24-hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week basis Table 15 below provides a summary of our 2019 call center response time performance. Details on the various call types handled by our residential call center representatives, Business Solutions Center (BSC), Credit and Personal Account Representatives (PAR) and our Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, along with performance information, can be found in **Attachment K**.

TABLE 15 – 2019 CALL CENTER RESPONSE TIME SUMMARY

Calls Included	2019 Performance	Reference to Att K
Residential, BSC, Credit, PAR, IVR handled outage calls	80.5% in 20 seconds or less	Line 27
Residential, BSC, Credit, PAR, all IVR handled calls	90.8% in 20 seconds or less	Line 26

As required by the Commission, we have included credit calls in our reported call center response time. We also provide as a comparison all service level calls offered to agents, which in addition to Residential, BSC, Credit and PAR, it includes all IVR handled calls.”

Additionally, formulas used to calculate lines 26 and 27 are explained in Attachment K,

“Line 26 The service level formula is: (All Calls Answered by Agents within 20 seconds + All IVR Handled calls) / (All Calls Offered to Agents + All IVR Handled Calls)

Line 27 The service level formula is: (All Calls Answered by Agents within 20 seconds + Outage Calls Handled by IVR) / (All Calls Offered to Agents + Outage Calls Handled by IVR).”

REQUEST:

- a. Please clarify if line 27 is used for reporting “Calls Regarding Service Interruptions” while line 26 reports “Calls the Business Office”, both described in Subpart 2 of 7826.1200.
- b. Please clarify why in Attachment K, calls received are separated by type (e.g. BSC, Credit, PAR, and Billing as well as Agent vs. IVR).
- c. Please explain why the “Service Level formula” was chosen for reporting.

Reporting in this way appears to imply that including IVR answered calls are included in the calculations of calls answered within the required 20 seconds. Including IVR calls in this manner does not fulfill the reporting specifications and more, may under report the time taken to answer calls. Further, if the Company were instead to report All Calls Answered by Agents within 20 seconds (990,248 calls; line 11, Attachment K) as a percent of All Calls Offered to Agents (1,288,811 calls; line 5), the percent of calls answered in 2019 within 20 seconds would be **76.83%** of calls, rendering the Company out of compliance with Rule 7826.1200.

Response:

A. As required by Minn. Rule 7826.1700, Line 27 of Attachment K reports “call center response times, including calls to the business office and calls regarding service interruptions,” as a combined metric. This line, therefore, includes both calls made to the business office, under Minn. Rule 7826.1200, Subp. 1 and calls regarding service interruptions under Subp. 2. As authorized under Minn. Rule 7826.1200, Subp. 2, for service interruptions, the metric on Line 27 includes outage calls made to the business office and outage calls handled by the IVR system. Although the reporting on call center response times has evolved organically over time and new lines have been added to Attachment K, we have used this same approach for reporting for more than 15 years, since Rules 7826.1200 and 7826.1700 became effective.

Line 26 of Attachment K reports service quality under the Company’s Section 6 Tariff and, consistent with the provisions of that section of the Tariff, includes all calls directed to the business office, regardless of whether the call is answered by a Company representative or the IVR system.¹

B. Calls directed to the Company’s business office are handled by more than one group depending on the type of call. Therefore, we have added this detail and broken down the calls handled by different groups for transparency. This reporting is consistent with our past Annual Service Quality reports and also reflects direction by the Commission, for example, that the Company provides all data regarding credit calls in its call center response times.² We describe in more detail below the different groups that handle customer calls:

- Residential Call Center: handles calls from residential customers
- Business Solutions Center (BSC): handles business customer calls mainly for our small/mid-sized business customers. BSC agents are trained to handle inquiries regarding products and services, contracts, and billing.
- Credit Calls: these are handled by a credit agent and include situations such as:
 - Calls from customers whose accounts are past due and have an active disconnect notice, or whose service has already been disconnected for nonpayment.

¹ NSPM Electric Rate Book, Section No. 6, Sheet No. 7.4 : “Telephone Response Time” measures the time to answer all customer initiated calls directed to the Company’s call center or to its business office, regardless of whether the call is answered by a Company representative or the Company’s Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system.”

² See Commission’s November 3, 2004 Order in Docket No. E002/M-04-511.

- Calls that are manually transferred to credit agents by other agents in the call center because the call involves credit related inquiries by the customer.
- Callers to the Business Solutions Center have the option in the IVR system to “speak to a representative about a deposit, credit arrangement or a past due notice.” A customer who selects this option is routed to a credit agent.
- Personal Account Representatives (PAR): handle calls that provide low-income assistance to customers.
- Billing: this is a call “type” and reflects customers that select the main menu option for billing and payment matters.
- Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System: a tool that provides quick and easy transactions for customers without having to speak to a customer service representative.

C. See our response to Subpart A above. We have reported our performance under Minn. Rules 7826.1200 and 7826.1700, as well as the Company’s Service Quality Tariff in this format consistently back to 2004, when we reported performance for the first time under the new Minnesota service quality rules in Docket No. E002/M-04-511 (Attachment J of the April 9, 2004 revised filing). Since that time, the data reported in this attachment has evolved to include more detail and additional information, such as additional groups that handle customers, but our overall approach to reporting has remained the same.

Preparer:	Adam Burnoski	Gail Baranko
Title:	Director, Measure & Analytics	Manager, Regulatory Affairs
Department:	Director Customer Care Ops	NSPM Regulatory
Telephone:	651-639-4915	612-330-6935
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