

South Dakota's Telecommunications Timeline

1874

Alexander Graham Bell conceived of the principle of telephone transmission and applies for patents.

1876

Bell invented the telephone on March 10 in Boston, Massachusetts.

1878

President Rutherford B. Hayes' administration installed the first telephone in the **White House**.

and...

The first commercial telephone exchange was activated at New Haven, Connecticut in January.

and...

The Western Union opened the first larger city exchange in San Francisco, California.

and...

The **first telephone exchange** in a territory (now South Dakota) was activated at Deadwood in March by Paul Rewman. Calls between the mountain communities of Deadwood and Lead (10 miles apart) cost 50 cents, 25 cents less expensive and a whole lot faster than a stagecoach ride between the two.

1885

The Dakota Territorial Legislature established the **Board of Railroad Commissioners**. Its powers and duties were implemented in 1886.

1886

Telephone exchanges at Aberdeen and Columbia were built by telephone pioneer J.L.W. Zietlow, owner of the **Aberdeen Telephone Company**.

1889

South Dakota became a state.

1890s

Aberdeen had more telephone lines per person than anywhere in the nation: one for every 6.5 people as compared to the U.S. with one for every 22.

1894

Bell's patents expired and the development of the telephone accelerated rapidly.

1898

The Aberdeen Telephone Company was reorganized as the **Western Dakota Telephone Company** and connected Aberdeen to Eureka. Later, the **Dakota Central Lines Company** was incorporated and purchased the Western Dakota Company and the Watertown exchange.

1902

PrairieWave's predecessor, the **Hurley Telephone Company**, was formed in southeastern South Dakota.

1903

The city of Brookings purchased the **Brookings Telephone System** from Dakota Central Telephone Company, creating history as the first municipal telephone plant in the US.

1904

The Dakota Central Lines Company was renamed the **Dakota Central Telephone Company**.

1905

Aberdeen, South Dakota became the first city in the US to offer automatic dial telephone service, due to the service of the **Dakota Central Telephone Company**.

1906

The **South Dakota Telephone Association** was formed by the independent telephone companies in the state.

1907

The South Dakota Legislature created the **South Dakota Telephone Commission**.

1908

Kennebec Telephone Company began operations in south central South Dakota.

1909

The South Dakota Legislature abolished the Telephone Commission and placed authority over telephone and telegraph operation with the **South Dakota Board of Railroad Commissioners** since telephone poles were typically built in the railroad rights-of-way.

and...

All of the **Dakota Central Telephone Company's** telephone wires in Aberdeen were buried, the first burial of lines anywhere in the US.

1916

Golden West Telephone Company was incorporated as a stock company by the State of South Dakota.

1917

The first commercial long distance service in the US took effect in Aberdeen, Huron and Watertown.

1922

J.L.W. Zietlow died. His company was valued at more than \$5 million and was the second largest employer in South Dakota, behind Homestake Gold Mine.

1923

Annual reports from 714 telephone companies in South Dakota were received and filed during the year by the South Dakota Board of Railroad Commissioners.

1927

AT&T demonstrated television transmission in the USA for the first time.

1928

Dakota Central Telephone was purchased by **Tri-State Telephone Company**.

1931

There were 660 telephone companies operating in the state, according to the South Dakota Board of Railroad Commissioners' records.

1934

The U.S. Congress established the **Federal Communications Commission** at the request of President Franklin Roosevelt.

1939

The South Dakota Board of Railroad Commissioners was renamed the **South Dakota Public Utilities Commission** to reflect a wider range of responsibilities.

1941

There were 717 telephone companies operating in the state, according to the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission.

1949

The amendment of the **Rural Electrification Act** in October allowed REA Funds to be loaned to finance and improve telephone service in rural America.

1951

The conversion to local dialing began.

1952

Golden West Telephone Cooperative Inc. was incorporated as a co-op by the State of South Dakota.

1954

The **South Dakota Association of Cooperatives** was incorporated.

1957

There were 692 telephone companies operating in the state, according to the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission.

1958

The **Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Telephone Authority** was created and became the first tribal-owned telecommunications company in the country.

1967

The conversion to one-party service began.

1970

Martin Group of Mitchell was founded in February. The company offered software to the telecommunications industry.

1973

Martin Cooper invented the first cell phone. It weighed two pounds.

1974

Buffalo and Camp Crook Exchanges of **Northwestern Bell** were sold to West River Cooperative.

1975

Northwestern Bell sold six exchanges to **Golden West Telephone Company** and one exchange to People's Telephone and Telegraph Company.

and...

Wood Community Telephone was taken over by **Golden West Telephone Company**.

1976

Twin Buttes Telephone Company was sold to **Midstate Telephone Company**.

1978

Northwestern Bell began rural service improvement.

1982

PrairieWave became the first telephone company in South Dakota to expand into cable TV.

and...

Bison State Pine Ridge exchange was sold to **Golden West Telephone Company**.

1983

The **South Dakota Telecommunications Association** was established in August with the primary purpose of negotiating toll settlements and to represent independent telephone companies in the state with regard to the divestiture of **AT&T**.

and...

AT&T provided long distance in South Dakota, and was no longer part of Northwestern Bell.

1984

The Northwestern Bell and shell telephone investigation was underway.

1987

Brookings Lake Cooperative was merged into Deuel Cooperative and their name was changed to **Interstate Cooperative**.

1988

New telecommunications regulations took effect in South Dakota.

1989

South Dakota Network – now called **SDN Communications** - was incorporated.

and...

Northwestern Bell eliminated zone and agri-business rates.

1990

Northwestern Bell went to sub-minute billing for additional minutes on toll calls.
and...

Northwestern Bell changed its name to **US West**.

and...

Local Exchange Carriers Association was formed.

and...

MCI started to provide long distance service in South Dakota.

1991

US West eliminated four and eight party line telephone service.

1994

US West proposed a sale of 67 local exchanges in South Dakota. Currently 80 percent of South Dakotans receive local service through **US West**.

and...

Range Telephone purchased E. Newcastle, Wyoming from **US West**.

1995

The Public Utilities Commission approved the purchase of 63 **US West** exchanges and the Commission opened a “MEGATEL” docket to solicit comments to determine what future telecommunications needs there would be in South Dakota.
and..

Ten digit long distance dialing began in South Dakota.

1996

Midcontinent Communications began offering broadband Internet services in Aberdeen and Sioux Falls.

and...

Mitchell Technical Institute (MTI) starts its Telecommunications program.

and...

McLeod USA was certified to provide long distance and local telephone service.

and...

#SAFE was enacted to provide highway advisories to travelers.

and...

US West sold eight exchanges: four to Vivian, three to Fort Randall, and one to East Plains telephone companies.

And...

DTG (PrairieWave’s predecessor) began providing the first competitive local telephone service in South Dakota.

1997

The **South Dakota K-12 school** wiring project began.

and...

Qwest and South Dakota Network (SDN) began installing Frame Relay Service (FRS).

and...

Northern Valley Communications was established in March, providing dial-up Internet access to northeastern South Dakota.

and...

Lakota Technologies Inc. of Eagle Butte was established, putting Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe members to work in the telecommunications industry.

and...

Sprint got certificate to provide local service.

1998

At year end, South Dakota had 246 certified long distance providers, 27 certified competitive local exchange providers and 61 certified local exchange companies.

and...

Black Hills Corporation unveiled its new component, **Black Hills FiberCom** and was certified to provide long distance and local telephone service.

and...

Innovative Systems began operations in Mitchell, designing and manufacturing application peripherals for telecommunication providers.

and...

Northern Valley Communications received long distance and local certification.

and...

Qwest and SDN add asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) switches to their network.

and...

Sioux Valley Wireless launches wireless broadband service after receiving a development license from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to test two-way wireless internet and data services.

and...

James Valley Telecommunications overbuilds part of the Aberdeen market through its subsidiary, Northern Valley Communications.

and...

SDN deploys SONET technology to offer protected service.

1999

Black Hills FiberCom expanded local calling in the Northern Black Hills.

and...

US West sold Sisseton exchange to **Venture Communications**.

and...

PrairieWave deploys broadband service.

and...

James Valley becomes first SD company to offer VDSL through Northern Valley.

and...

Interstate Telecommunications Cooperative (ITC), Sioux Valley Teleco, Santel Communications Cooperative and Alliance Communications Cooperative all launch DSL.

2000

Computer Generated Solutions, Inc. of New York City and **Lakota Technologies** of Eagle Butte entered into an alliance to help create telecommunications jobs on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe reservation.

and...

All **South Dakota K-12 schools** are wired and connected to the Internet. The project took less than four years, involved 650 inmates, more than 650,000 working hours, wiring a total of 622 buildings.

and...

South Dakota State Capitol building went to wireless Internet access.

and...

Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative debuts DSL.

2001

South Dakota state government's network converted entirely to broadband.

and...

SDN uses advanced technology to expand network capacity by dividing laser light into different colors instead of plowing more fiber into the ground (also known as Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing or DWDM).

2002

Vantage Point Solutions was launched in Mitchell in July, offering telecommunications engineering and consulting.

and...

511 was implemented for highway advisories for travelers, replacing #SAFE.

and...

South Dakota native Jonathan S. Adelstein is nominated by President George Bush to serve on the five-person Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

and...

SDN deploys digital cable system to reach 60+ rural communities.

and...

ITC, McCook and James Valley/Northern Valley are the first SD companies to offer video over DSL.

and...

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Telephone Authority launches DSL.

2003

The **MTI** Technology Center is built in Mitchell to house the Telecommunications and Satellite programs.

and...

M&N Communications, based in Pierre, debuts its wireless broadband service.

2004

Qwest offered broadband service to homes in a 14-state area, including South Dakota. By mid-December, the company served over one million households with Qwest DSL.

and...

67% of South Dakota's population had access to broadband cable modems or DSL services. The state had 7,000 miles of fiber optics, owned and maintained by **SDN**, **Qwest** and **Black Hills FiberCom**.

and...

Golden West deploys fiber-to-the-home network serving 100% of homes and businesses in Gregory.

and...

Santel Communications Cooperative, with assistance, design and engineering from **Vantage Point Solutions** (VPS), secures a \$19.9 million loan through the USDA's Broadband Loan Program for Mitchell Telecom, the largest "fiber-to-the-premise" broadband access system in the state.

and...

President Bush re-nominates **Commissioner Adelstein** to the FCC.

2005

Golden West Companies served 36,000+ access lines and ranked as the largest independent non-US West telephone company in the state.

and...

Midcontinent Communications marked 60 years of existence. The company served 200 communities throughout North and South Dakota, Minnesota and Nebraska, including cable TV, high-speed Internet and telephone services. Cable companies as a group serve 88 South Dakota communities with broadband.

and...

Northern Valley Communications was the largest Internet service provider in northeastern South Dakota and the fourth largest in the state.

and...

Mitchell Telecom begins offering telephone, high-speed Internet and digital television within the city limits of Mitchell.

and...

PrairieWave announced its decision to buy **Black Hills FiberCom**, making the company the largest broadband over-builder in the region.

And...

South Dakota Bureau of Information & Technology estimates that 68.6% of South Dakota's population has access to broadband.

and...

The state has more than **15,000 miles** of fiber optics, owned and maintained by SDN, Qwest, PrairieWave, and other telecommunications and cable television providers.

and...

Qwest serves over one million households region-wide with Qwest DSL and provides DSL in 16 South Dakota communities.

and...

James Valley extends broadband access to 100% of customers in its service area.

and...

South Dakota Telecommunication Association (SDTA) members have approximately 23,000 broadband customers in more than 250 communities in the state.

and...

Several SDTA member companies and other entities deploy "**Wild Blue**" satellite broadband service.