

# CPUC Considers Rate Increases for Varcomm Customers

*Varcomm opposes 16 percent rate increase proposed by CPUC's Public Advocates Office, encourages customers to attend public hearing.*

DUCOR, CALIFORNIA, USA, February 29, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Varcomm, also known as



We disagree with the rate increase proposed by the CPUC's Public Advocates Office. It is disappointing that they are taking positions that ignore the interests of low-income rural communities."

*Eric Votaw, Varcomm CEO*

Ducor Telephone Company, urges customers to attend a public participation hearing scheduled for March 12, 2024 at 6 p.m. to oppose rate increases on voice services that Varcomm provides, according to Varcomm Holdings Chief Executive Officer Eric Votaw.

"The CPUC is considering whether to raise Varcomm's rates in an ongoing proceeding," said Votaw. "The CPUC's Public Advocates Office is pushing for significant rate increases even though Varcomm has proposed to keep prices at current levels."

The hearing will be held on March 12, at 6 p.m. at Ducor Union Elementary School and customers can attend in person or virtually online at [adminmonitor.com/ca/cpuc/](https://adminmonitor.com/ca/cpuc/).

The CPUC's Public Advocates Office initially refused to disclose its specific rate proposal in advance of the public hearing, but it later revealed that it will seek a 16% increase in basic telephone rates.

"Simply put, we vehemently disagree with the major rate increase proposed by the CPUC's Public Advocates Office. Varcomm will continue to advocate for our customers, many of whom live below the poverty line," said Votaw. "Our customers are primarily seasonal farm workers who struggle earning a low wage. It's Ducor's responsibility to provide quality affordable telecommunications services. With Congress refusing to allocate additional funds for the Affordable Connectivity Program and no current state support to fill the void, our customers need the support from the CPUC to continue to provide affordable telephone and broadband service to rural areas that are consistently overlooked by other providers."

Varcomm, one of the smallest telecom companies in the state, has applied for funding through

the California High Cost Fund-A (CHCF-A), to help support deployment of high-quality broadband and telephone infrastructure in the rural areas of Tulare and Tehama counties in California. With past funding from CHCF-A, Varcomm has performed major infrastructure and hardware upgrades to its network, integrated state-of-the-art technology to elevate its redundancy and broadband capabilities, and completed building its Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) network in Ducor. Varcomm has accomplished these milestones while still maintaining rates that are below the national average.

“Quality telecommunications access democratizes education, business, healthcare and more, and without this funding, our customers would be deprived of fast and reliable broadband services, unlike customers in the larger areas, like Los Angeles, San Francisco and even Sacramento,” said Votaw. “They may be in a rural area that is far from the decisionmakers at the CPUC, but Varcomm will continue to advocate for our customers’ rights to access telecommunications services without raising rates to costs our customers cannot sustain. It is disappointing that the Public Advocates Office is taking positions that ignore the interests of low-income rural communities.”

With its request of \$2.1 million from CHCF-A, Varcomm intends to continue system upgrades to its network. These upgrades include expanding FTTH facilities in Tulare County; installing a FTTH buildout in Rancho Tehama, which will include building fiber to the elementary school, fire station and the community church; and installing fiber optic lines in Kennedy Meadows. These additional upgrades will enhance medical and emergency services to all exchanges.

For more information on how to attend the public hearing, please visit [varcomm.net](http://varcomm.net), or contact [communications@varcomm.biz](mailto:communications@varcomm.biz).

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VARCOMM Holdings Inc. owns and operates a diversified portfolio of companies including Ducor Telephone Company, VARCOMM Broadband Inc., Varnet Land Administration, Inc. VSquared Land, LLC, and IHN Ventures Inc., mainly centered in the central valley and northern California as well as Roome Telecommunications Inc, in Halsey OR. The company was founded in 1910 when farmers in southern Tulare County California banded together to create a small telephone network with a single telephone line, and later incorporated in 1954 to create Ducor Telephone Company by the Roome family. In 1977, the company then began to expand service to Rancho Tehama and later to Kennedy Meadows. It began providing Internet services in 1993 under the name Varnet Inc. The company adopted the name VARCOMM (part of VARCOMM Holdings Inc.) in 2018, along with the introduction of broadband and enhanced services. In 2021, with Eric Votaw and Jenifer Vellucci finalizing ownership of VARCOMM, it became the first Mexican-American and female-owned incumbent local exchange carrier (ILEC) in California’s history. In 2022 the company acquired Roome Telecommunications Inc, a telephone, broadband and cable system in Halsey, Oregon.

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