

Q. INFORMATION SYSTEMS

PUB 24.0 (RE: p. 67 & 68 of 73) Network Infrastructure (\$276,000)

PUB 24.3

What problems has the company experienced over the past five years that have resulted in the network at the System Control Centre not being available for twenty four hours per day every day?

A. In 2003, a number of network interruptions were experienced over a period of several weeks that were eventually traced to a switch failure. The high availability network switch is intended to avoid such network interruptions at the System Control Centre.

System Control Centre personnel rely on the computer network to access applications for problem call logging and switching orders as well as general business productivity applications such as word processing and spreadsheets. When the network is unavailable, those processes must be performed manually.

From a customer perspective, network interruptions at the System Control Centre affect the Outage Notification System, which provides recorded outage information to customers by telephone. When network access is interrupted, updates to information on the Outage Notification System cannot occur until Information Systems personnel manually correct the system. In the interim, customers are unable to access the most current outage information.

When the faulty network switch was identified in 2003, it was replaced. However, since that time, the System Control Centre has also had five planned interruptions to network access to accommodate vendor recommended updates to the network switch. Because the existing switch does not have built in redundancy, the System Control Centre was unable to use network resources during these interruptions.

The redundancy of the new switch will maintain the System Control Centre's access to network resources in the event of a failure of the switch, and will also allow maintenance to be performed on the switch without interrupting network availability.