



Idaho Public Utilities Commission

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Case No. GNR-T-15-06, Order No. 33355

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www.puc.idaho.gov

Commission taking comments through Oct. 6 on proposed second area code for Idaho

BOISE (Aug. 11, 2015) – The days of a single area code for Idaho are coming to an end.

An agency that contracts with the federal government to administer the nation's area code numbering plan recently informed Idaho officials and telecommunications providers that Idaho's "208" area code is projected to run out of available numbers in mid-2018. The proliferation of wireless telephones, new competitive telephone companies, paging and messaging services and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is contributing to the increase in demand for new telephone numbers.

Idaho's telecommunications providers are asking the Idaho Public Utilities Commission to begin a 16-month implementation period for a second area code. There is no cost to customers.

The telecommunications providers are recommending that the commission implement a "geographic overlay" of the new area code as opposed to a "geographic split."

The geographic overlay would superimpose the new area code over the entire state, but assign it only to new numbers. All existing customers would retain their 208 area code with only new numbers assigned the new area code. However, all customers would be required to begin 10-digit dialing for all calls, which would include the area code, prefix and four-digit number.

The geographic split divides the state into two territories with the new area code assigned to one of the two regions to be determined later. Under this option, citizens in the region assigned the new area code would have to change their telephone numbers and 10-digit dialing would not be required for calls within the same area code. The geographic split has not been implemented in at least 10 years in parts of the country getting new area codes and is not being recommended for Idaho.

The commission will later announce a schedule for processing this case that may include customer workshops or hearings. To date, the commission has determined that the case be processed by written comment. The commission is taking comments on the application through October 6.

By implementing numbers conservation plans, the commission has been able to delay a second area code.

In August 2001, Neustar, the company that administers the nation's numbering plan, projected a fall 2003 exhaust of the 208 area code. In response, the Idaho commission ended the assigning of 10,000-number blocks to telecommunications providers requesting numbers. The commission directed Boise area telecommunications providers to return unused numbers and then the commission re-issued new number requests in only 1,000-number blocks. In 2007, Neustar again projected a 208 exhaust for the second quarter of 2010. At that time, the commission extended statewide the same number pooling plan it had implemented for the Boise metro area. That approach extended the exhaust date about another seven years.

According to the North American Numbering Plan Administrator, there are only 12 states left with one area code, but second area codes are being proposed in half those states, including Idaho, Delaware, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. Other states with one area code include Alaska, Hawaii, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming.

Comments are accepted via e-mail through Oct. 6, 2015, by accessing the commission's Website at www.puc.idaho.gov and clicking on "Case Comment Form," under the "Consumers" heading. Fill in the case number (GNR-T-15-06) and enter your comments. Comments can also be mailed to P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720-0074 or faxed to (208) 334-3762.

The commission's order and other documents related to this case are available on the commission's Website. Click on "Open Cases" under the "Telecom" heading and scroll down to the case number above.

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