



*Case No. GNR-T-15-06, Order No. 33559*

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## PUC plans workshops in five Idaho cities to explain transition to second area code

**BOISE (July 27, 2016)** – Staff from the Idaho Public Utilities Commission will be conducting workshops throughout Idaho to assist telephone customers transition to a second area code and 10-digit dialing.

Voluntary 10-digit dialing (area code, plus prefix, plus four-digit number) begins this November and mandatory 10-digit dialing in August 2017.

The purpose of the workshops is to explain why a second area code – 986 – has become necessary and inform customers of the deadlines to implement the second area code and begin 10-digit dialing. “Because the commission has already made its final determination regarding the numbers relief plan and implementation deadline, these workshops will be informational in nature and not an opportunity to discuss alternatives,” the commission said in its order announcing the workshops.

The 986 area code will be issued only to new telephone numbers and will not require a change in rates. Idaho is one of few states that still has one area code, “208” issued in 1947.

In July 2015, Neustar, Inc., the administrator of the North American Numbering Plan, projected that Idaho would run out of available numbers under its 208 area code by mid-2018. In response, the commission opened a case, taking comments from customers and Idaho telecommunications representatives. In November, the commission issued a final order, adopting an “all-services overlay,” plan that assigns the new area code statewide to new numbers. This option means that no one will have to change their existing numbers, but it will require that all customers in Idaho dial 10 digits.

Neustar originally projected a new area code would be needed by August 2001. Since then, the commission implemented various numbers conservation plans that have been successful in

delaying a second area code by 15 years. However, 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 numbers, making further delay impossible.

While the commission acknowledged that 10-digit dialing may be inconvenient for some, the move to 10-digit dialing is inevitable due to advancing technology, regardless of whether Idaho had to acquire a second area code. Developing technology “will eventually drive seven-digit dialing into obsolescence,” the commission said. “Thus, any future dialing change and relief planning will be eased by the implementation of 10-digit dialing now rather than later.”

Most telecommunications devices, even landline phones, now have number storage capability that allows customers to program numbers into their phones and reach their contacts with the press of one or two buttons.

The workshops, all beginning at 7 p.m. local time, will be as follows:

**August 10 – Nez Perce County Commission Building, 1424 Main St., Lewiston.**

**August 11 – Driftwood Bay Student Union Building, North Idaho College, 100 W. Garden Ave., Coeur d’Alene.**

**September 27 – Newberry Building, 160 N. Main St., Pocatello.**

**September 28 – City Council chambers, 305 Third Ave. East, Twin Falls.**

**October 4 – Idaho Public Utilities Commission hearing room, 472 W. Washington St., Boise.**

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 Case No. GNR-T-15-06.

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