

AREA CODE RELIEF FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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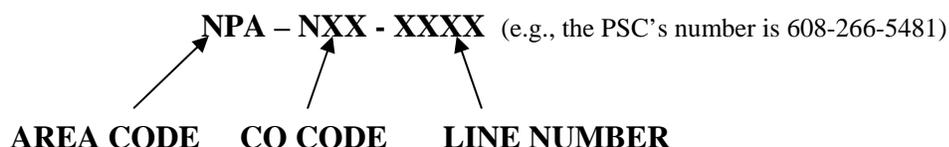
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The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) is currently investigating relief alternatives for both the 715 and 920 area codes. Area code relief involves adding a new area code in all or part of the area served by an existing area code that is running out of telephone numbers. This document addresses some frequently asked questions pertaining to area code relief.

Telephone Number Basics:

Our telephone numbering system operates under the North American Numbering Plan. That plan, developed in 1947 by AT&T, and subsequently adopted by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC), established the 10-digit scheme we use today:



- The “NPA” (Number Plan Area) is the area code. Wisconsin currently has 5 area codes: 715, 414, 608, 920, and 262. An area code can not begin with a 0 or a 1.
- The “NXX” is the central office (CO) code, also referred to as the “prefix.” An NXX serves a specific exchange or rate center. For a CO code, N = 2-9 and X = 0-9.
- The XXXX is the line number for a customer. For these numbers, X = 0-9, thus, in any NXX code, there are potentially 10,000 line numbers available for assignment: 0000-9999.

Why are we running out of numbers?

In recent years, the prevalence of technology in everyday life has increased tremendously. Many households no longer have a single phone number for the entire family. Instead, customers often have multiple telephone lines, multiple cell phones and Internet access. The combination of new technologies (i.e. OnStar, Voice over Internet Protocol), new telecommunications providers requiring their own telephone numbering inventories and the increased demand for telecommunications services in general (such as cellular phones, pagers, fax machines, modems, alarms and internet access) have strained our existing telephone number resources, both in Wisconsin and across the country.

Why do we need new area codes?

While many of the new technologies make life easier, they require the use of telephone numbers. The rapid growth of the telecommunications industry has resulted in a relatively new phenomenon known as area code “exhaust.” An area code reaches exhaust when nearly all of the telephone prefixes within that area code have been assigned. It is now projected that the 715 area code will run out of new telephone prefixes by the third quarter of 2010 and that the 920 area code will run out of new prefixes by the second quarter of 2011.

In general, the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) assigns telephone numbers to a telecommunications provider by NXX. As more NXX codes in the area code are assigned, the area code approaches exhaust, thus creating the need for an additional area code to be added in that particular geographic area. In recent years, regulators and the telecommunications industry have implemented various conservation measures to help reduce the rate of area code exhausts and to improve the utilization of the telephone numbers within a

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given NXX code. These conservation measures include thousand-block number pooling, Local Number Portability (which enables a customer to change service providers but keep their telephone number) and rate center consolidations where possible.

What is the planning process to establish a new area code?

The NANPA is responsible for assigning new NXX codes to telecommunications providers, monitoring the usage of NXX codes within an area code and for forecasting when an area code will most likely exhaust and require the implementation of an additional area code. The NANPA notifies the appropriate state regulatory commission, as well as the telecommunications industry, three years in advance of when an area code is expected to run out of new NXX codes. The planning process begins with NANPA and the telecommunications industry meeting to identify viable relief solutions. When developing and evaluating area code relief plans, the telecommunications industry is required to follow the regulations established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and state regulatory commissions, as well as established industry guidelines. Once all of the reasonable alternatives have been identified, industry representatives strive to reach consensus on the most efficient relief plan for the area as a whole. The proposed plan, along with industry's recommendation, is then submitted to the state regulatory commission for consideration.

Who decides how to implement the new area code?

The FCC has broad jurisdiction over telephone number issues, while the NANPA manages the administration and assignment of area codes in the United States. However, the FCC has given each state the authority to determine how to introduce new area codes. In Wisconsin, the PSC makes these decisions. The decision for the PSC is not whether to do area code relief (a new area code must be introduced once an area code approaches exhaust), but how to implement it.

What are the methods used to provide area code relief?

The two methods of relief are a geographic area code split or an overlay. Both methods of area code relief have been successfully implemented in various parts of the country.

What is a geographic split?

With a geographic split, the geographic area served by an existing area code is split into two smaller areas. One of the sections will retain the existing area code while the other section will receive a new area code. In addition:

- Splits maintain a single area code for each geographic area. This may minimize confusion for callers from outside of the area. Future splits, if any, would continue to reduce the geographic size of the area code.
- Splits require an area code change for approximately one-half of the customers. Stationery, business cards and advertising would need to be revised by those customers receiving the new area code.
- Geographic splits permit seven-digit local dialing within the area code.

In Wisconsin, the current 262 and 920 area codes were created when the 414 area code was split on two previous occasions.

How is a new area code introduced in a geographic split?

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A new area code is introduced in two steps. These steps are designed to guide consumers, familiarize them with the new area code and facilitate the correct use of the new area code:

1. **Permissive Dialing:** Permissive dialing allows callers to reach numbers in the new area code, whether they dialed the old area code or the new area code when placing calls. During this transitional period, customers should make an effort to begin using the new area code. The permissive dialing period begins with the introduction of the new area code and generally lasts six months. This provides a 'get acquainted' transition period for the new area code.
2. **Mandatory Dialing:** When permissive dialing ends, an intercept recording period will begin. At this time, callers **must use the appropriate area code**. Incorrectly dialed calls will be referred to a recorded announcement informing the calling party that the new area code must be used in order to complete the call. After the recording period ends, callers who do not use the correct area code may reach a wrong number.

How will an area code split impact my home and business telephone service?

Your calling areas and rates will not be impacted by an area code split. Calls that were considered local before the introduction of the new area code will remain local calls. Calls that were considered long distance before the new area code will remain long distance calls. However, if your area code changes, you should notify family, friends and business associates of this change. You may also need to modify items such as stationery, business cards, advertisements, alarm equipment, automatic dialers, bill statements, checks, computer lists, electronic banking information, emergency contact lists, identification bracelets, fax machines, health provider cards, pet ID tags and speed dial lists.

Additionally:

1. Some business customers, particularly those with a PBX or ISDN service, may need to upgrade or adjust their own telephone equipment to handle the new area code. *Not all business equipment will require upgrading.* If you have specific questions regarding your equipment, please contact your vendor for additional information or assistance.
2. Once the new area code has been determined, a test number will be established at least 30 days prior to the start of permissive dialing. This will allow business customers to verify that their equipment can complete calls to the new area code. The test number may be obtained from the associated planning letter for each area code on NANPA's website: www.nanpa.com.

What is an overlay?

An area code overlay occurs when more than one area code serves the same geographic area. Relief is provided by implementing a new area code within the same geographic region as the area code that is exhausting. With an overlay, all current customers keep their area code and telephone number. However, telephone numbers with the new area code will eventually be assigned to new customers requesting service, as well as to existing customers ordering additional lines. Because both area codes reside within the same geographic area, all local calls must be dialed using the area code and the 7-digit telephone number (10 digits). In addition:

- There are multiple area codes serving the same geographic area with an overlay, but the geographic size of the area code is maintained. Subsequent area code relief in the area, if needed, will most likely be another overlay.

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- Overlays avoid the need for public and political involvement concerning split boundaries and determining which side of the split line should retain the old area code.
- An overlay will not require existing customers to change their area code. There is no need to revise stationery, business cards and advertising unless these printed materials contain only 7-digit phone numbers.
- An overlay may require that customers adjust their automatic dialers or call forwarding arrangements to incorporate the area code on all calls.

Why must an overlay apply to all services?

This is a FCC requirement so that all telecommunications providers and technologies are treated alike. If the new area code only applied to some services (say to wireless services or new telecommunications providers), there would be a competitive disadvantage. The telephone numbering system is intended to be competitively and technology neutral.

Why is it necessary to dial the area code and the 7-digit telephone number (10 digits) for local calls with an overlay?

This is also a FCC requirement. With an overlay, two area codes exist in the same geographic area. As a result, the area code is needed to properly route the calls to the correct destination. The 10-digit dialing requirement also avoids disadvantaging newer providers and promotes the goal of having a numbering system that is competitively neutral.

How is a new area code introduced in an overlay?

The new area code is introduced in three steps. These steps are designed to guide consumers by familiarizing them with the new area code and the dialing changes that are required with an overlay.

1. **10-Digit Permissive Dialing:** During a permissive 10-digit dialing period, customers are encouraged to begin using the area code and the 7 digit number to place all local calls within the area code, although these calls will still complete if caller dials only the 7-digit number. During this time, life safety systems, alarms, PBX's, fax machine calling lists, speed dialers, private entry access systems, auto-dialers and out-dialing lists on personal computers should be reprogrammed.
2. **Mandatory 10-Digit Dialing:** Mandatory 10-digit dialing begins at the end of the formal permissive dialing period. Callers must use the area code and the 7 digit number for all local calls within the area code. Calls incorrectly dialed using only 7-digits will be referred to a recording which will inform the calling party that it is necessary to dial the area code and the 7-digit telephone number to complete the call.
3. **Introduction of the New Area Code:** Numbers in the new overlay area code are introduced shortly after mandatory 10-digit dialing begins.

How will an overlay and 10-digit dialing impact my home and business telephone service?

Your calling areas and rates will not be impacted by an area code overlay. Calls that were considered local before the introduction of the new area code will remain local calls. Calls that were considered long distance before the new area code will remain long distance calls.

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However, during the permissive dialing period both residential and business customers should begin making changes in anticipation of the scheduled mandatory dialing date:

- Dial all local calls using the area code and the 7-digit number (10 digits).
- If you have equipment or services that are pre-programmed to dial using only 7 digits, it's important to reprogram to 10-digit dialing for all local calls before the mandatory dialing date. Also, be sure to update any call-forwarding, automatic-dial or speed-dial features that you may have.
- Update printed materials such as stationery and checks to include your 10-digit telephone number.
- Let family, friends and business associates know about your 10-digit number.
- Teach children their 10-digit telephone number and how to call home.
- Educate elderly relatives and friends about on the need to dial 10 digits.

Additionally business customers should:

1. Update life safety systems, fax machines, private dial access entry and PBXs. Contact your equipment vendor(s) if you need assistance.
2. Update other sophisticated services and equipment such as message detail recording equipment, alternate route or least-cost routing systems, toll restriction, mobile telephone service, cellular telephone service, alarm circuits and PC modems.
3. Include 10-digit telephone numbers on all printed materials such as stationery, checks, business cards, advertisements, promotional items, brochures and catalogs.
4. Inform employees and customers about the 10-digit dialing requirement in the area and the need to dial all local calls by using 10 digits.
5. Notify alarm service providers of the 10-digit dialing requirement so that records and equipment can be updated as needed.
6. Test telephone equipment to determine if it can dial and accept 10-digit dialed calls. Questions regarding changes to your telephone equipment should be directed to your equipment vendor(s). ***Any updates or changes to equipment must be made prior to the scheduled mandatory dialing date.***
7. At least thirty days prior to the start of permissive dialing a test number will be established. This will allow business customers to verify that their equipment can complete calls to the new area code. The test number will only be active for a limited time period.

What are the key differences between a geographic split and an overlay?

The following table outlines the key differences between a geographic split and an overlay:

Issue	Geographic Splits	Overlays
Area Codes	Splits maintain a single area code for each geographic area.	Overlays have two or more area codes within a single geographic

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Issue	Geographic Splits	Overlays
		area.
Telephone Numbers	Splits require an area code change for approximately one-half of the customers.	Overlays do not require existing customers to change their area code.
Local Calling	Splits permit 7-digit dialing for local calls within the area code.	Overlays require 10-digit dialing for all local calls.
Consumer Expenses	Printed materials such as stationery, business cards and advertising must be revised by those customers receiving the new area code.	There is no need to revise any printed materials unless they contain only 7-digit telephone numbers.
Size of the Area Code	Splits reduce the geographic size of the area code.	Overlays maintain the current size of the area code.

Will the cost of my calls change because of a new area code?

No, your calling areas and calling rates will not be impacted by an area code split or overlay. Calls that were considered local before the introduction of the new area code will remain local calls. Calls that were considered long distance before the new area code will remain long distance calls.

How does a new area code affect other telecommunications services?

- 911 services will **NOT** be affected by the introduction of a new area code. Emergency calls will continue to be handled just as they are today.
- 411 services will **NOT** be affected by the introduction of a new area code. Directory assistance calls will continue to be handled and billed just as they are today.
- Access to other services such as 211 (information and referral services), 511 (travel information), 711 (TTY services) and 811 (Diggers Hotline), will **NOT** be affected by the introduction of a new area code. These calls will continue to be handled just as they are today.
- All directories, as they are published, will be updated to reflect the new area code information. Directories in a geographic area affected by an overlay will publish both the area code and the 7-digit telephone number for each customer's listing. Individual business customers are responsible for verifying the accuracy of their listings that appear in additional directories as well as the telephone information appearing in their paid advertising.

Why not assign a new area code to just fax or wireless services?

Perhaps the most common suggestion from the public facing an unwelcome area code change is to create an area code that is used only for wireless services, fax machines or other non-wireline, non-voice uses such as credit card verification. However, the FCC has banned this type of use for area codes.

The FCC specifically prohibits area code relief plans that exclude a particular type of telecommunications service from an area code or those relief plans that segregate services and/or technologies into different area codes. The FCC's decision sought to protect new telecommunications services from discrimination or disadvantage. For example, if a new area code were assigned only to cellular services, all local calls between a cellular customer and a

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wireline customer would require 10-digit dialing, while a wireline-to-wireline call could be made by dialing 7 digits. Such a dialing disparity would favor wireline customers at the expense of cellular customers. Also, through local number portability, wireline numbers can be ported to a wireless service provider and vice versa. This co-mingling of numbers and technologies prevents these services from being separated by area codes.

Why not add a digit or two to the telephone number instead of adding area codes?

The public has also suggested various means of expanding the current dialing plan. The most frequent suggestion is adding an 8th digit to the customer's line number (i.e. 555-1212X). Wisconsin is an integral part of the North American Numbering Plan and cannot unilaterally make changes in the dialing protocol that other regions, indeed other countries, rely upon. National planners are studying means of expanding the current numbering system. However, such changes will have to be made on a multi-national basis and will almost certainly require years to implement in a coordinated manner. Such efforts will not eliminate the need for area code relief in both the 715 and 920 area codes the immediate future.

What is the official source of area code information?

NeuStar, Inc., in its role as the North American Numbering Plan Administrator, is the official source for area code information. Additional area code information can be found at:

<http://www.nanpa.com>

When will Wisconsin's area codes need relief?

The North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) is responsible for forecasting when an area code will most likely exhaust and require the implementation of an additional area code. The most recent projections were published in November 2007. Wisconsin's current projected exhaust dates are:

NPA	Current Forecast	
	Year	Quarter
262	2020	2Q
414	2028	3Q
608	2016	3Q
715	2010	3Q
920	2011	2Q

What area code relief options are being examined for the 715 area code?

NeuStar, in its role as the North American Numbering Plan Administrator and on behalf of the telecommunications industry in Wisconsin, filed a petition with the PSC seeking relief in the 715 area code on August 9, 2002. That petition identified six relief alternatives; one overlay and five split options, but recommended an overlay for the 715 area code. Since then, several numbering conservation measures have been implemented that helped to extend the projected life of the 715 area code by approximately five years. However, exhaust of the current area code is now approaching and a new area code is required.

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On January 29, 2007, NeuStar notified the PSC that based on the most recent projections, relief planning activities need to resume for the 715 area code. At that time, NeuStar anticipated that the 715 area code would run out of new telephone prefixes by the fourth quarter to 2009. More recent estimates indicate that the 715 area code will last until the third quarter of 2010. You may view NeuStar’s petition that outlines the six relief alternatives, as well as the other documents associated with this case (Docket 5-TN-100) on the PSC website at: <http://psc.wi.gov>.

Will there be public hearings to discuss the proposed relief options for the 715 area code?

Yes, there will be nine hearings throughout the 715 area code in September 2007:

Date	Afternoon Location	Evening Location
September 17, 2007	1:00 p.m. River Falls Public Library Main Level Meeting Room 140 Union Street River Falls, WI 54022	7:00 p.m. Eau Claire Senior Center Upper Great Room 1616 Bellinger Street Eau Claire, WI 54703
September 18, 2007	1:00 p.m. Wausau City Hall Council Chambers 407 Grant Street Wausau, WI 54403	7:00 p.m. Marinette City Hall 1 st Floor Council Chambers 1905 Hall Avenue Marinette, WI 54143
September 19, 2007	1:00 p.m. Rhineland City Hall Council Chambers 135 S. Stevens Street Rhineland, WI 54501	7:00 p.m. Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center Multipurpose Room 29270 County Highway G Ashland, WI 54806
September 20, 2007	1:00 p.m. Hayward City Hall Council Chambers 15889 W. 3 rd Street Hayward, WI 54803	6:30 p.m. Superior Public Library Meeting Room 1530 Tower Avenue Superior, WI 54880
September 21, 2007	1:00 p.m. Medford Community Center Taylor County Fairgrounds Highway 64 and Highway 13 Medford, WI 54451	None

NOTE: The hearings were held as scheduled.

What will the new area code be in the 715 area?

At this time, the PSC does not know what the new area code will be. NANPA will assign the new area code once the PSC has made its decision on the method of area code relief to be used (a geographic split or an overlay) and the implementation schedule. The new area code will be widely publicized at that time and it will be referenced on the PSC’s website.

What area code relief options are being examined for the 920 area code?

On June 19, 2007, NeuStar, in its role as the North American Numbering Plan Administrator and on behalf of the telecommunications industry in Wisconsin, filed a petition with the PSC seeking relief in the 920 area code. At that time, NeuStar anticipated that the 920 area code would run

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out of available telephone prefixes by the second quarter of 2010. More recent estimates indicate that the 920 area code will last until the second quarter of 2011.

NeuStar’s petition identified four relief alternatives; one overlay and three split options, but recommended an overlay for the 920 area code. You may view NeuStar’s petition that outlines the four relief alternatives, as well as the other documents associated with this case (5-TN-106) on the PSC website at: <http://psc.wi.gov>.

Will there be public hearings to discuss the proposed relief options for the 920 area code?

Yes, there will be seven hearings throughout the 920 area code in October 2007:

Date	Afternoon Location	Evening Location
October 15, 2007	3:30 p.m. Mead Public Library Josephine A. Rocca Meeting Room 710 N. 8 th Street Sheboygan, WI 53081	None
October 16, 2007	1:00 p.m. Sturgeon Bay City Hall Council Chambers 421 Michigan Street Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235	7:00 p.m. Green Bay City Hall Room 207 100 N. Jefferson Street Green Bay, WI 54301
October 17, 2007	1:00 p.m. Appleton Public Library Lower Level Meeting Room 225 N. Oneida Street Appleton, WI 54911	7:00 p.m. Oshkosh City Hall Room 404 215 Church Avenue Oshkosh, WI 54901
October 18, 2007	1:00 p.m. Rolling Meadows Golf Course Meeting Room 560 W. Rolling Meadows Drive Fond du Lac, WI 54937	6:30 p.m. Watertown City Hall Room 41-Lower Level 106 Jones Street Watertown WI 53094

NOTE: The hearings were held as scheduled.

What will the new area code be in the 920 area?

At this time, the PSC does not know what the new area code will be. NANPA will assign the new area code once the PSC has made its decision on the method of area code relief to be used (a geographic split or an overlay) and the implementation schedule. The new area code will be widely publicized at that time and it will be referenced on the PSC’s website.

Whom should I contact with questions and comments?

Specific questions pertaining to your telephone service should be directed to your local service provider at the number printed on your billing statement. General questions and comments regarding both of these cases can also be referred to the PSC.

Public Service Commission:

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1. Documents associated with either the 715 area code relief plan (Docket 5-TN-100) or the 920 area code relief plan (Docket 5-TN-106) may be viewed on the PSC website at: <http://psc.wi.gov>.
2. Media inquiries may be directed to Amanda Wollin by e-mail at: amanda.wollin@psc.state.wi.us, or by telephone at (608) 266-9600.
3. General questions may be directed to the docket coordinator: Kathleen Bakke, by e-mail at: kathleen.bakke@psc.state.wi.us, or by telephone at (608) 267-9254.