

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PROJECT EXHAUST DATE FOR 402 AREA CODE EXTENDED

LINCOLN – The Nebraska Public Service Commission has been informed by the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) that the projected exhaust date for numbering resources in the 402 Area Code had been extended from the second quarter of 2005 to the second quarter of 2006, which was originally projected to exhaust in the 2nd quarter of 2000.

The original forecasted exhaust date of fourth quarter 2000 required the Commission to hold hearings and workshops to identify a relief plan that could be implemented to provide new numbering resources. Communications Department Staff informed the Commission at the hearing that an area code exhaust relief plan requires 18 to 24 months to implement. The Commission would have had to begin the relief process in earnest if the new projected exhaust date for the 402 area code had not been extended to second quarter 2006.

“The Commission has worked diligently to seek a solution to area code exhaust because of the inconvenience, confusion and cost to Nebraska citizens,” said Commissioner Anne Boyle of Omaha.

Historically, numbering resources are assigned in blocks of 10,000 numbers. Each rate center, or telephone exchange, is assigned at least one block. As a result, sparsely populated Cherry County is allocated 80,000 numbers for its’ eight rate centers just as densely populated Douglas County is initially allocated 90,000 for its’ nine rate centers. As more numbers are needed, they are traditionally assigned in blocks of 10,000. This method of number assignment leaves unused numbers stranded in areas that do not currently have a sufficient demand for this quantity of numbers nor will they have in the foreseeable future.

Among the measures advocated by the Commission in the five years that it has been working on area code relief, has been thousands block number pooling and rate center

consolidation. Numbers that are now assigned in blocks of 10,000 would be assigned in blocks of 1,000. This is a technique that Alltel recently used to reduce its' need for new numbering resources. Rate center consolidation is another technique in which two or more adjacent rate centers are consolidated into one for numbering purposes. Qwest used this method to consolidated several rate centers in suburban Omaha and northeast Nebraska in Dakota and Burt Counties. Commission Chairman Jerry Vap of McCook said, "These are two areas of cooperation by carriers proactively helping the PSC conserve numbering resources."

Only 34 percent of the assigned numbers in the 402 area code currently are in use and only 19 percent of the number resources assigned are being used in the 308 area code. The problem is many of the unused numbers are stranded in low-density, and/on-demand areas and cannot be used in other areas in need of additional numbering resources.

The 308 area code forecasted exhaust date of the second quarter of 2026 is the basis that some in the industry cite as a reason to not worry about number resource conservation in the 308 area code. However, Commission staff cautions that numbering resources are finite. In only six years, the projected exhaust date for the 308 area code has gone from the first quarter of 2077 to the second quarter of 2026. Voice over Internet (VoIP) Protocol and other new technologies on the horizon, will have an impact on the demand for numbering resources however, the question of who will be requesting to use Nebraska's numbering resources is an unknown. .

Noting that a proactive effort by the Commission and carriers is necessary to preserve the two area codes, the Commission approved a comment period to May 18 for carriers to submit technical issues to be placed on the agenda for a workshop to be scheduled this summer to address number pooling and note certain consolidation methods to conserve numbering resources and extend the life of the 308 and 402 area codes.

Boyle said, "If we are reactive to the needs of both the citizens and carriers to numbering resources, they are going to exhaust. If we're proactive, we can delay that for the foreseeable future and not impact the man on the street." Commissioner Frank Landis of Lincoln noted, "It's critical that Nebraskans drive this train and not let our fate be determined by folks in Washington, D.C."

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