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## PSC Announces New Area Code and Relief Plan

The Nebraska Public Service Commission (NPSC) announced Tuesday that an all services overlay will be used to provide new telephone numbers when the Commission is notified that the 402 Area Code no longer has numbers available. Commissioner Anne Boyle said, "Selecting a relief plan is the next step in the process which the Commission began over ten years ago. While the exact date the numbers in the 402 Area Code will run out cannot be predicted, the present date of the second quarter of 2011 is now inside the timeline required for the necessary industry planning and public education that must occur prior to implementation of the all services overlay. The new area code will be 531 and will not be activated until the numbering resources in the 402 Area Code are actually exhausted."

In addition to ordering an all services overlay, the Commission also ordered that the 402 area code will adopt a ten-digit dialing plan. In a ten-digit dialing plan, the area code must be dialed in addition to the traditional seven digit telephone number. The implementation plan to be developed by the telephone industry will include a recommended time line for public education and the start and duration of the permissive dialing period during which local calls may be dialed using either seven or ten digits. The telephone industry has also been asked to provide a recommendation relative to adopting permissive ten-digit dialing in the 308 Area Code to provide consistent dialing patterns across the State.

In 1999, the Commission was first notified that the telephone numbers in the 402 area code were projected to run out in the fourth quarter of 2000. At that time the Commission began a series of actions including thousands-block number pooling and rate center consolidation to conserve the existing numbering resources for as long as possible.

In determining a course of action the Commission had two forms of relief to consider. The relief plan selected, which had overwhelming support, is an all-services overlay wherein a new area code is established in addition to the existing 402 Area Code for the same geographic area. The selection of an overlay will require ten-digit dialing for all numbers within the footprint of the existing 402 area code where the new area code will be introduced with the added benefit that all consumers may keep their existing numbers. The other relief plan was an area code split which if adopted would have divided the existing 402 area code into two geographical areas. One area would keep the 402 area code and the other would be assigned the new area code. This plan would not require ten-digit dialing within the separate area codes but would require everyone in the new area code to change their telephone number, make changes to their marketing materials, reprogram numbers stored in customer premise equipment, dial ten digits to reach the new adjacent area code and update all references to their old number. Commission Chairman Frank Landis said “Clearly the overlay plan is the fairest approach for all of the customers in the 402 Area Code. By adopting an overlay we avoid creating ‘winners and losers’ in the process.”

The full text of the order (C-4152) can be found on the Commission web site at [psc.nebraska.gov](http://psc.nebraska.gov).

Contact information

(402) 471-3101

(800) 526-0017 (in-state toll free number)

Chairman Frank Landis

Commissioner Anne Boyle

Commissioner Rod Johnson

Commissioner Tim Schram

Commissioner Jerry Vap

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