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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **PSC DECIDES TO SPLIT AREA CODE 270** *Eastern portion to retain current numbers*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (May 31, 2007) – The Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) has decided to accommodate the rising demand for new telephone numbers in western Kentucky by splitting area code 270, with the eastern portion retaining the current area code.

In an order issued today, the PSC said that the western portion of area code 270, which includes the cities of Henderson, Hopkinsville, Madisonville, Murray and Paducah, will be assigned a new area code. Cities remaining in area code 270 include Bowling Green, Columbia, Glasgow, Elizabethtown and Owensboro.

The decision on where to retain area code 270 was made “on the basis of greatest population density and areas of fastest growth,” the PSC said.

Mandatory use of the new area code will take effect on October 1, 2008. A transition period during which either the new area code or area code 270 may be used in the affected area will begin by April 1, 2008.

The new area code number will be determined by the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA), which is responsible for allocating phone numbers to telecommunication providers.

Before reaching its decision, the PSC actively sought public input. Public meetings were held last October and November in Hopkinsville, Paducah, Henderson, Bowling Green, Elizabethtown and Owensboro, the six most populous cities in area code 270.

“Most of the comments we received, and there were relatively few, were in favor of splitting the area code,” PSC Chairman Mark David Goss said. “That has been the practice in the past in Kentucky and we felt it was appropriate in this case as well.”

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The other option the PSC considered was to “overlay” a new area code on the area code 270 territory. An overlaid area code would require 10-digit dialing for local calls, but no changes to existing phone numbers.

In deciding where to draw the line splitting area code 270, the PSC considered local calling areas, telephone company service boundaries and other technical issues, as well as public input. The boundary selected was preferred by both the telecommunications industry and members of the public who commented on the issue.

NANPA notified the PSC in August 2006 that area code 270 was likely to run out of available phone numbers later this year. NANPA subsequently revised the exhaustion date to the fourth quarter of 2008.

The need for new numbers is being driven by rapid growth in the area and the proliferation of cellular phones and other wireless devices that each require a new phone number.

In an effort to further extend the life of area code 270, the PSC last year asked the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to institute a procedure that would have required telecommunication providers to make available thousands of unused numbers held by them. The FCC has not yet acted on the PSC’s request.

Because the process of establishing a new area code takes between 15 and 18 months, the PSC had to act now if the new area code was to be fully functional by the fourth quarter of next year.

In today’s order, the PSC noted that new area codes in Kentucky have always been created by splitting existing area codes. Area code 270, which covers the western half of Kentucky, was created from a portion of area code 502 in April 1999 and area code 859 was carved out of area code 606 a year later.

But the practice of splitting area codes may become less feasible in the future due to complications introduced as the geographic areas become ever smaller, the PSC said. Therefore, the option of creating overlays “may become a more attractive solution,” the PSC said.

The PSC said it “understands the difficulties, inconvenience and expense associated with changing an area code and will make every effort to ensure that the transition is efficient.” The PSC ordered all telecommunications providers in the area to submit, within 60 days, their plans for educating their customers about the split and the consequent dialing changes.

Although an area code can, in theory, include as many as 10 million potential phone numbers, there actually are far fewer numbers available for use. Certain sequences of numbers are not used.

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Remaining numbers are allocated to telecommunication companies in groups of 10,000 known as NXX codes, or groups of 1,000 known as NXX-X blocks. A company may not use all of the numbers in a code or block.

Area code number exhaustion occurs when there are no number blocks remaining to be assigned.

Documents in the area code 270 case can be found on the PSC Web site, which is [psc.ky.gov](http://psc.ky.gov). The case number is 2006-00357.

The PSC is an independent agency attached for administrative purposes to the Department of Public Protection in the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and has approximately 110 employees.

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