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NEWS RELEASE

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Start Date for Area Code 364 Postponed Until January 2012 *Need for new numbers has slowed significantly, PSC says*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (June 2, 2009) – The Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) today further extended the time for residents of far western Kentucky to continue using area code 270, basing the decision on new data from the agency that distributes telephone numbers.

The optional use of area code 364 will now take effect on Jan. 1, 2012, 21 months later than the previous implementation date of April 1 of next year.

“A number of factors have combined to greatly reduce the demand for new phone numbers,” PSC Chairman David Armstrong said. “If this trend continues, it is quite possible that a new area code in western Kentucky will be postponed for a considerable time.”

Area code 364 is to cover the western portion of the current area code 270, which includes the cities of Henderson, Hopkinsville, Madisonville, Murray and Paducah.

The PSC has postponed the use of area code 364 on three previous occasions, largely due to a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) decision that changed the assignment of telephone numbers in the present area code 270. That change significantly increased the availability of new numbers in the existing area code.

At the same time, a weakened economy and a reduced usage of telephone numbers dedicated for use by computer and fax modems has slowed the demand for new numbers.

“The PSC realizes that repeatedly moving the start date for area code 364 creates a degree of uncertainty,” Armstrong said. “But that is preferable to imposing the inconvenience and expense of an area code switch before it is needed.”

On May 31, 2007, the PSC 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. Cities remaining in area code 270 include Bowling Green, Columbia, Glasgow, Elizabethtown and Owensboro.

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Also on May 31, 2007, the FCC granted the PSC's request for a change in the way in which telephone numbers are allocated to telecommunication providers by the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA). The FCC decision allowed the PSC to require a procedure known as "number pooling," which was expected to free up thousands of unused telephone numbers.

About two million numbers are now available in area code 270.

The current area code 270 was established in 1999. In 2006, NANPA had projected area code 270 would run out of numbers by late last year.

NANPA now projects that area code 270 will reach number exhaustion by the second quarter of 2012.

Area code number exhaustion occurs when there are no blocks of numbers available for assignment to telecommunication providers. Allocating numbers in smaller blocks can extend the life of an area code.

Prior to number pooling, most numbers in area code 270 were assigned in blocks of 10,000 known as NXX codes. Under number pooling, most numbers areas now are assigned to telecommunication providers in blocks of 1,000, known as NXX-X blocks. Because a company may not need to use all of the numbers in a code or block, the use of the smaller groupings reduces the quantity of numbers that are assigned but unused.

The number pooling directive required companies to relinquish any unused 1,000-number blocks. Hundreds of 1,000-number blocks have since been returned to the pool of available numbers.

Today's action marks the fourth delay in the start date for area code 364. The original start date of April 2008 had earlier been postponed to July 2008, then to January 2009, and again to April 2010, as NANPA revised its projections.

Documents in the area code 270 case can be found on the PSC Web site, which is psc.ky.gov. The case number is 2006-00357.

The PSC is an independent agency attached for administrative purposes to the Energy and Environment Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in Kentucky and has approximately 100 employees.

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A 12-second audio actuality is available at:

<http://psc.ky.gov/agencies/psc/press/062009/ac270actuality6-1-09.mp3>