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Three Months To New Area Code in Western Kentucky *10-digit dialing in area code 270 becomes mandatory in February*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Nov. 1, 2013) – Telephone customers in western Kentucky have three months left to prepare for mandatory 10-digit dialing, which begins early next year when area code 364 is added to the same geographic area as the current area code 270.

"We are now halfway through the transition period that allows customers to become accustomed to the new dialing patterns," Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) Chairman David Armstrong said. "There are only three months left to get used to dialing the area code on all calls and to reprogram phones and other equipment that uses automatic dialing."

A six-month "permissive dialing" period began in August. Customers now can dial either seven or 10 digits when making local calls in area code 270. Mandatory 10-digit-dialing of local calls begins Feb. 1, 2014.

The permissive dialing period allows telecommunication providers to prepare and test equipment in advance of the establishment of the new area code.

An informational video about the permissive dialing period is available on the PSC YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/KYPSC>.

Area code 364 was created in December 2012 when the PSC decided that the best way to meet the need for more telephone numbers in area code 270 was through the creation of an overlay, which superimposes a new area code over an existing area code.

The overlay option is the least disruptive for all customers and imposes the smallest cost on businesses in the area, the PSC said in its order creating area code 364. This is the first area code in Kentucky created by an overlay.

"Keep in mind that an overlay does not change current area code 270 numbers; everyone can keep their current number," Armstrong said. "The only change is the 10-digit dialing requirement for local calls."

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Current dialing patterns remain in effect until Jan. 31, 2014. However, customers who wish to use the new dialing patterns before then may do so. Calls will be connected either way.

For the next three months, local calls within area code 270 (as well as local calls to numbers outside area code 270) may be dialed using either 7 or 10 digits – that is, with or without the area code. Dialing 1 for local calls is not necessary now and will not be necessary after Feb. 1, 2014. Local calls will not become long-distance calls.

Emergency response agencies or others who use reverse 911 or other outbound dialing systems should be using the permissive dialing period for preparation and testing. Phone-based security systems and medical alert systems also need to be prepared and tested well in advance of the mandatory date so that any problems can be detected and addressed.

“By now, anyone who uses telephones for critical functions involving health or safety should be well on the way to reprogramming or upgrading systems as necessary and testing them to make sure they are working correctly with 10-digit dialing,” Armstrong said.

In its December order, the PSC noted that public comments received in the case overwhelmingly favored an overlay. The other option was to split area code 270 and designate a portion as area code 364, with both landline and wireless customers in the affected portion required to change their area code as a result.

The PSC noted that area code overlays have become the preferred method for creating new area codes nationwide. Overlays pose the fewest technical issues for implementation by an increasing complex telecommunication industry, the PSC said.

The first numbers using area code 364 may be assigned beginning March 3, 2014. Area code 270 numbers can be assigned after that date, but their availability will depend on how many remain in the inventory of each individual service provider.

Service providers in area code 270 are required by the PSC to educate their customers about the changes resulting from the new area code.

All records in the area code case are available on the PSC website, psc.ky.gov. The case number is 2012-00129.

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 90 employees.

TEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT KENTUCKY'S NEW AREA CODE

1. All current area code 270 numbers remain unchanged. Everyone with a 270 area code number can keep it. Nobody is required to change their area code or phone number.
2. The overlay affects both landline and wireless services.
3. Area code 364 will be overlaid on top of area code 270. That means that area codes 270 and 364 will occupy the same physical space beginning March 2014.
4. In order to distinguish between phone numbers with area code 270 and those with area code 364, 10-digit dialing will be required for all local calls within the overlay.
5. Ten-digit dialing also will be required for local calls into or out of the overlay in those areas that now allow seven-digit local calling across the area code 270 boundary.
6. Ten-digit dialing means dialing the area code before dialing the number itself – for example: 270-555-1212 or 364-555-1212.
7. Long-distance calls within the overlay will require 11-digit (1-plus) dialing, just as long distance calls to other area codes do now.
8. A transition period, known as permissive dialing, will begin on August 3, 2013 and end on January 31, 2014. During that time, local calls can be made using either seven-digit or 10-digit dialing.
9. On February 1, 2014, 10-digit dialing for local calls will become mandatory in the area code 270/364 territory.
10. Numbers with area code 364 may be distributed beginning March 3, 2014. Telecommunication service providers may continue to distribute 270 numbers for as long as they have any remaining in their inventories.