

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

In the Matter of Area Code Relief for) DOCKET NO. UT-990219
the 360 Number Plan Area)
Filed by NeuStar, for the Washington)
State Telecommunications Industry) ORDER POSTPONING
in the Form of an Overlay; and Creation) IMPLEMENTATION OF
of the 564 Plan Area for All of Western) AREA CODE RELIEF PLAN
Washington)
.)

BACKGROUND

By order dated October 20, 1999, the Commission implemented area code relief for area code 360.¹ The area code relief plan approved by the Commission for area code 360 was an overlay of a new area code, 564. Customers in the 360 area code were initially scheduled to begin mandatory 10-digit dialing in August, 2000. By order dated February 23, 2000, the Commission postponed the implementation date for 10-digit until February 1, 2001.

On February 16, 2000, the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA), NeuStar, Inc., filed with the Commission a final plan to relieve the anticipated shortage of telephone numbers in the current 206, 253, and 425 area codes. The Commission on May 10, 2000, approved a modified plan in which the 564 overlay code would be implemented in the 206, 253, and 425 areas and mandatory 10-digit dialing would begin on October 20, 2001.² The Commission also directed the industry to submit an education plan for Commission approval by July 1, 2000.³

The Commission has jurisdiction over the implementation of area code relief. FCC rules provide that:

State commissions may resolve matters involving the introduction of new area codes within their states. Such matters may include, but are not limited to: Directing whether area code relief will take the form of a geographic split, an overlay area code, or a boundary realignment; establishing new area code boundaries; establishing necessary dates for the implementation of area code relief

¹*In the Matter of Area Code Relief for the 360 Number Plan Area*, Docket No. UT-990219 (October 20, 1999).

²*In the Matter of Area Code Relief for the 206, 253, 425 Number Plan Area*, Docket No. UT-991535 (May 10, 2000).

³*Id.*

plans; and directing public education and notification efforts regarding area code changes.

47 C.F.R. § 52.19(a).

MEMORANDUM

At the Commission's June 16, 2000, open meeting, the Staff recommended that the current implementation date for the 564 overlay code in the 360 area be postponed until October 20, 2001. Doing so would allow for a single public education and advertising program for the entire western Washington region. The Staff stated that such a coordinated approach would be easier for consumers to understand and would increase the likelihood that the industry will successfully implement the requirements of 10-digit dialing.

The only concern raised by postponing the overlay in area code 360 is that it might result in a shortage of telephone prefixes for assignment to telecommunications companies in the area. The industry is currently limiting the allocation of additional prefixes to seven per month. Staff has worked closely with companies that currently have prefixes in the 360 area and has identified many instances in which companies are willing to return prefixes to the number administrator. In addition, Staff noted that the number conservation efforts being undertaken by the Washington Exchange Carrier Association, pursuant to our order in Docket UT-991627, will enable companies to return additional prefixes. Based on known and reasonably anticipated steps being taken by the telecommunications industry to improve the efficiency of its use of telephone numbers, Staff has concluded that a delay in implementation of the overlay code will not unreasonably interfere with the ability of companies to obtain telephone numbers necessary to their business.

The Commission concurs in the recommendation to delay area code relief implementation in the 360 area. The Commission has consistently said that it will impose the burden of area code relief on consumers and businesses in Washington only after the industry has demonstrated that it is using its existing supply of numbers as efficiently as possible. The number conservation efforts identified thus far are a second step in the right direction. Together with the initial delay from August, 2000 until February, 2001, the current recommendation will give consumers and businesses more than a year of additional time before 10-digit dialing and the overlay area code begin.

The Commission is persuaded that the conservation efforts identified are sufficient to permit the implementation delay recommended by Staff. The Commission expects the industry to continue these efforts so that the public can be assured that the burdens they experience from area code relief are matched by the burdens being borne by the telecommunications industry itself.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The current area code relief plans call for the 564 area code to be implemented in the 360 area on February 3, 2001, and in the 206, 253, and 425 areas on October 20, 2001.
2. It is in the public interest to coordinate the dates for the implementation of the 564 area code for all four area codes in western Washington. A single implementation date will be easier to explain to customers.
3. Implementation of the overlay plan in the 360 area can be delayed until October 20, 2001 without placing an undue burden on the telecommunications industry. To the extent this delay creates a shortage of telephone prefixes, the industry has available to it number conservation strategies sufficient to mitigate any adverse effect.
4. With a delay in implementation of the overlay plan, it is reasonable to delay the current July 1, 2000, deadline for the industry to submit its education plan.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Commission has jurisdiction pursuant to RCW 80.36.610, which authorizes the Commission to conduct proceedings and take actions contemplated for action by state commissions under the Telecommunications Act of 1996. That act, as implemented by the Federal Communications Commission, authorizes state commissions to establish necessary dates for implementation of area code relief plans. 47 U.S.C. §251(e)(1); 47 C.F.R. § 52.19(a).

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

1. Implementation of the 564 overlay code for the 360 number plan area shall be postponed until October 20, 2001. Mandatory 10-digit dialing shall begin on October 20, 2001. Any telecommunications company that has not already implemented permissive 10-digit dialing in the 360 area shall do so by September 1, 2000.
2. The industry shall prepare a customer notification and education plan for the Commission's approval no later than September 30, 2000. The plan shall provide for customer education and notification throughout all of western Washington. The industry shall demonstrate that the plan spending levels are sufficient to ensure that members of the public will have the information necessary for appropriate telephone number dialing.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective this 16th day of June, 2000.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MARILYN SHOWALTER, Chairwoman

RICHARD HEMSTAD, Commissioner

WILLIAM R. GILLIS, Commissioner