



California Public Utilities Commission

505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102

Issue Summary

PUC EFFORTS IN PRESERVING AREA CODES - 310

May 2003

SUMMARY

In an effort to preserve area codes and minimize costs to homes and businesses of changing phone numbers, the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) is monitoring compliance by telecommunication carriers with the telephone number conservation rules the Commission has implemented during the past three years. These rules have staved off what appeared in 1999 to be the necessity of adding 16 new area codes to California's roster of 25 area codes. The number conservation rules have also allowed carriers to continue to receive phone numbers to serve new customers in the 310 and 909 area codes three years after the previously forecasted expiration dates of these area codes.

The Commission is continuing to petition the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) for additional authority to pursue more ambitious number conservation measures, such as a specialized overlay area code for non-geographic phone numbers (numbers used for fax machines and data transmission) and more aggressive number pooling, while planning for the eventual need for new area codes in the 310 and 909 areas. Number pooling allows for the assignment of numbers to carriers in thousand-blocks, groups of 1000 numbers, rather than whole prefixes or groups of 10,000 numbers.

The PUC has reclaimed 70 prefixes throughout California and in 2002 convinced the two largest telephone companies to donate an additional 1,790 thousand-blocks throughout California, including additional donations to the 310 number pool. Number pooling rules allow carriers to maintain up to a 6-month inventory of available numbers. Commission staff is assessing carriers' inventory levels to determine whether carriers should return more blocks to the 310 number pool.

310 Area Code History

- The 310 area code (Western, Eastern and Southern Los Angeles County) was created when it was split from the 213 area code in 1992.
- In 1997, Eastern Los Angeles County and Long Beach were split from the 310 area code to form the 562 area code.
- In early 1998, the PUC approved an area code overlay in the 310 area. An overlay assigns another area code over the same geographic region as the current area code. Once implemented, customers expressed objections to the overlay and the 1+10-digit dialing requirement. Therefore, the PUC stopped implementation of the overlay in June 1999, and suspended mandatory 1+10-digit dialing in September 1999.

- The PUC released a [report](#) on the utilization of phone numbers in the 310 area code in March 2000, which identified 3 million available numbers.
- The PUC released an [audit report](#) on the 310 area code in February 2001, which identified an additional 214,000 available phone numbers.

Conservation Measures

- In December 1999, the PUC ordered a number pooling trial in the 310 area code, which began for wireline carriers on March 18, 2000. Pooling by wireless carriers began November 24, 2002. Pooling has saved an estimated 120 prefixes so far in this area code.
- In July 2000, the PUC adopted fill rate, imminent exhaust, and sequential numbering conservation rules:
 - The fill rate rule requires phone companies to use 75 percent or more of the numbers they have before requesting additional numbers;
 - The imminent exhaust rule requires the company to show that its supply of numbers will exhaust within 6 months before requesting numbers;
 - The sequential numbering rule requires companies to use at least 75 percent of their numbers in all prior blocks before assigning numbers in the next thousand-block.

Numbers Available

- 3.2 million numbers remain unused in the 310 area code:
 - 352,000 in blocks donated to number pool;
 - 80,000 in whole prefixes;
 - 2.8 million in carriers' inventories.
- North American Numbering Plan Administrator (the organization responsible for numbering plans for the Public Telephone Network in the U.S. and its territories) currently projects the 310 area code will run out of numbers in the fourth quarter of 2003.

PUC Petition Before the FCC

Petition to Raise Pooling Contamination Level to 25 percent:

- Current pooling rules allow carriers to donate to the number pools thousand-blocks that are 10 % or less contaminated (blocks with 100 or fewer customers assigned).
- Increasing the allowed contamination level will allow more blocks to be donated to the number pools, promote the Commission's goal of more efficient number usage, and help delay area code exhaust.

The FCC has not yet acted on this petition.

Future Options for the 310 Area Code

- The North American Numbering Plan Administrator submitted a two-way split plan to the PUC in 1998. The plan splits the present 310 area roughly along Imperial Highway between Inglewood and El Segundo.
- The PUC approved the plan as a backup in September 2000, in [Decision 00-09-073](#), pending the results of pooling and other conservation

measures, and is monitoring when to implement the plan. When the back-up plan is implemented, approximately 1.9 million customers would take an area code change.

- On May 6, 2003, the PUC issued a Draft Decision to implement the 310 back-up plan. At the same time, Commissioner Loretta Lynch issued an Alternate Draft Decision denying the implementation of the 310 back-up plan.
- Both the Draft Decision and the Alternate Draft Decision are scheduled to come before the full Commission for a vote in June 2003.

For more information on the PUC's actions to preserve area codes, please visit the PUC's website at www.cpuc.ca.gov.