

QUICK FACTS: Idaho's Area Code



- Idaho telecommunications providers were informed in 2015 that Idaho's "208" area code is projected to exhaust by mid-2018, necessitating a second area code by no later than Fall 2017. The second area code will be "986." There is no impact on rates.
- Idaho has been able to avoid a second area code for 16 years. The state was informed in 2001 that the area code would exhaust by 2003. The commission implemented a numbers conservation plan in the Boise metro area that worked until 2007 when the state was notified that the area code would exhaust in 2010. The commission then extended the numbers conservation plan statewide, bringing us to a mid-2018 exhaust. As of August, 95.5% of available numbers have been assigned.
- In June 2016, Idaho's telecommunications providers asked the Idaho PUC to begin a 16-month implementation period for a second area code. Beginning **Nov. 2, 2016**, customers can begin using 10-digit dialing. If you forget and dial seven digits, your call will still be completed. Beginning **Aug. 5, 2017**, customers must use 10-digit dialing or you will receive a recording asking you to hang up and dial again. Beginning **Sept. 5, 2017**, new numbers may be assigned using the 986 area code.
- The commission had two options to implement a second area code. An all-services overlay would superimpose a new area code over the entire state, but assign it to new numbers only. All existing callers would retain their 208 area code and their original number. However, this method requires 10-digit dialing for all calls: area code, prefix and four-digit number.
- The geographic split would have divided the state into two regions with the new area code assigned to one region. Citizens in the region assigned the new area code would be required to change their telephone numbers. Ten-digit dialing would not be required for calls within the same area code.

- The all-services overlay was the unanimous recommendation of Idaho telecommunications providers. No state in the last decade has chosen the geographic split. In its Order issued Nov. 2, 2016, the PUC adopted the all-services overlay and a schedule for its implementation. The commission's Order is here:
http://www.puc.idaho.gov/fileroom/cases/tele/GNR/GNRT1506/ordnotc/20151102FINAL_ORDER_NO_33414.PDF . A press release summarizing the Order is here:
<http://www.puc.idaho.gov/fileroom/cases/tele/GNR/GNRT1506/staff/20151102PRESS%20RELEASE.PDF>

- The industry's Best Practices recommendation accepted by the Federal Communications Commission cites these benefits to an all-services overlay:
 - All existing customers would retain their current area code and would not have to change their existing numbers.
 - Does not require about half of customers to change their numbers, thus creating winners and losers and avoiding statewide conflict over who retains the existing area code and who must adapt to a new number.
 - Less financial impact on business customers because there is no need to change signage, advertising, stationery, business cards and billing forms. No discrimination by forcing some business customers to incur significant expense that other business customers do not.
 - Does not split legislative districts, cities, counties and school districts into different area codes.
 - No technical impacts to number portability, text messaging or multi-media messaging.
 - Less customer confusion and an easier education process.
 - Avoids negative impacts to E-911, industry and alarm system databases that would have to be updated with new numbers.
 - Avoids negative impacts to directories and directory assistance databases.
 - While an all-services overlay would require 10-digit dialing, technological advances, especially in Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) will require everyone to move to 10-digit dialing anyway, likely within the next decade.
 - While 10-digit dialing will be an adjustment and may appear inconvenient, most all phones, both landline and cellular, can now be programmed to automatically dial 10-digits with the press of just one or two numbers for all the people you frequently call.