

QUICK FACTS: Idaho's Second Area Code

- Idaho telecommunications providers were informed earlier this year that Idaho's "208" area code is projected to exhaust by mid-2018, necessitating a second area code by no later than the fall of 2017. There is no impact on rates for local and long distance calls.

- Idaho has twice been able to avoid a second area code. 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.



- Idaho's telecommunications providers are asking the Idaho Public Utilities Commission to begin a 16-month implementation period for a second area code with the goal of utilizing the second area code by the fourth quarter of 2017.
- A geographic 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. However, this method requires 10-digit dialing for all calls: area code, prefix and four-digit number.
- The geographic split divides the state into two regions with the new area code assigned to one of the regions to be determined later. Under this option, citizens in the region assigned the new area code would need to change their telephone numbers. Ten-digit dialing would not be required for calls within the same area code.
- The geographic overlay is the unanimous recommendation of Idaho telecommunications providers. While the Federal Communications Commission allows states a choice between an overlay and a split, no state in the last decade, based on their past experiences with a geographic split, has chosen that option.
- The industry's Best Practices recommendation accepted by the Federal Communications Commission cites these benefits to a geographic 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 which region retains the existing area code and which region 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 E911, industry and alarm system databases that would have to be updated with new numbers.
 - Avoids negative impacts to directories and directory assistance databases.
 - Everyone in the state shares some of the burden and inconvenience of the change rather than asking one half the state to bear almost the entire burden.
- The following are cited as advantages to a geographic split:
- Maintains seven-digit dialing for local calls within the same area code.
 - About one-half of customers would experience no change if they keep their current area code.
- While the FCC permits states to oversee area code planning and implementation, the Industry Numbering Committee requires that the projected lives of area codes be roughly equal, which, in the case of a geographic split also requires roughly equal population in each region. Thus, recommendations that the split be according to Idaho's time zones or that the Boise metro area be one region and the rest of the state be a second region would not work. Below this document is a map of the proposed geographic split if the Commission were to adopt this method. Area B (southwest Idaho) would have a projected life of 65 years and Area A, 68 years. A plan with greater than a 10-year difference in projected area code life must be submitted to the FCC for approval.
- Want to comment? Comments are accepted via e-mail through Oct. 6, 2015, by accessing the commission's Website at www.puc.idaho.gov and clicking on "Case Comment Form," under the "Consumers" heading. Fill in the case number (GNR-T-15-06) and enter your comments. Comments can also be mailed to P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720-0074 or faxed to (208) 334-3762.