

Frequently Asked Questions Area Code 205 Overlay

- Q. Why is it necessary to add an additional area code to the geographic boundary associated with area code 205?
- A. The North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) works with the utility commissions in each state to manage telephone numbering resources. NANPA maintains a database of telephone numbers assigned to telecommunications providers from those available in each area code. NANPA issues a numbering resources utilization forecast (NRUF) that projects when all the telephone numbers available in each area code will exhaust based on existing and projected number assignments. The most recent NRUF shows that telephone number resources for area code 205 are forecasted to exhaust in the year 2020. Action must be taken to introduce a new area code into the geographic boundary associated with area code 205 prior to its exhaust.
- Q. How are the numbering resources being depleted in area code 205?
- A. Every cellular provider, wireline provider, alarm service provider, and voice over the internet (VoIP) phone service provider is assigned numbers from those available in each area code. Subscriber growth and the expansion of services requiring phone numbers eventually exhausts the numbering resources available within an area code.
- Q. What is the plan for relieving numbering resources exhaust within the geographic boundary associated with area code 205?
- A. At its August 7, 2018 monthly business meeting, the Commission approved an overlay of the new area code within the geographic boundary associated with area code 205. Thus, the existing area code 205 geographic boundary will have two area codes available for numbering resources assignment: 205 and the new area code (659).

The preferred relief plan for area code exhaust in the United States is an overlay. The last time any existing area code boundary was split into separate areas, each assigned its own separate area code, was in October 2007 when New Mexico's only area code at the time (505) was split into separate geographic boundaries. Area code 575 was assigned to the new geographic area created by the split. Since then, area code relief throughout the United States has been accomplished via an overlay of the existing area code.

Splitting a geographic area out from an existing area code and assigning the new geographic boundary a new area code has personal and financial consequences. It requires that everyone in the area that gets the new code change their 10-digit phone number. All personal and business contacts must be informed of the telephone number change. With an overlay, everyone keeps their existing telephone number. Going forward, number assignments within the same geographic boundary may come from either area code.

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Q. Why is it necessary to dial the area code plus the seven digit-number where an overlay is used?

A. In a contiguous geographic area wherein only one area code is available, that area code is assumed to be part of the telephone number by default. Telephone number 555-1234, for example, is assigned to only one unique account in a geographic boundary assigned a single area code. Where two or more area codes are deployed within the same geographic area, the area code cannot be assumed. Using the same example, 555-1234 could be assigned to two separate users; one in each of the two area codes. Additional information (the area code) is required to route calls to the intended call recipient.

Q. Will 205 be the only area code boundary in Alabama wherein an overlay exists?

A. No, in 2010, area code 938 was added to the geographic boundary served by area code 256. (northern Alabama). Telephone subscribers within that area code geographic boundary have been dialing ten-digits since 2009.

Area code 205 was previously forecasted to exhaust in 2003. In 2001, the Commission approved an overlay as the method for exhaust relief of area 205. However, mandatory numbering resource conservation and code reclamation practices which were implemented by the Commission at that time along with reduced numbering resources demand, extended the life of area code 205. Consequently, implementation of the overlay was suspended. Area code 205 is again approaching exhaust and no additional measures are available to defer the forecasted exhaust.

Q. When can subscribers within the 205-area code expect to begin ten-digit dialing?

A. The “permissive dialing period” begins April 13, 2019 and ends October 11, 2019. During this timeframe telephone users may, but are not required to, enter the area code plus the seven-digit number when placing a local call. If the user dials just the seven-digit number for a local call, the call will still be completed. The permissive dialing period is an opportunity for telephone users to become accustomed to dialing ten-digits when placing local calls.

Mandatory ten-digit dialing begins October 12, 2019. At this time, users must dial the area code plus seven-digit telephone number to complete a local call. Otherwise, the user’s call will not be completed, and they will receive a recorded message instructing them to dial the number again with the area code.

Q. What will remain the same?

A.

- Your telephone number, including the current area code, will not change.

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- The price of a call, coverage area, or other rates and services will not change due to the overlay.
- What is a local call now will remain a local call regardless of the number of digits dialed. Landline customers that dialed 1 or 0 plus the area code and number for a long-distance call prior to the overlay must do the same with the new overlay.
- You can still dial just three digits to reach 911.
- If 211, 311, 411, 511, 611, 711 or 811 services are available in your community, you will still dial just those 3-digits.

Q. What will change and what actions should I take in preparation for the overlay?

A. In addition to changing your dialing procedures:

- All services and equipment currently programmed to dial just seven-digits for a local call must be reprogrammed. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - automated dialing equipment,
 - safety systems,
 - business private branch exchange (PBX) equipment,
 - Fax machines,
 - Programmed numbers for dial-up internet service,
 - Alarm and security systems or gates,
 - Speed dialers,
 - Call forwarding settings,
 - Voice mail services.
- When acquiring, renewing, or reordering the following, you may want to ensure your area code is included:
 - Business and personal stationary,
 - Business cards,
 - Business and personal checks,
 - Advertising including vehicle decals and logos.

Q. Where can I find information online about the new area code 205 overlay and who can I contact to discuss the overlay?

A. A list of frequently asked questions and answers to them are provided at the following URL:

<http://www.psc.state.al.us/Telecom/index.htm>

Direct any additional consumer questions to **Darrell Baker** at the Alabama Public Service Commission

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Email: darrell.baker@psc.alabama.gov

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All inquiries from the media should be directed to **Angier Johnson:**

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- Q. What Alabama counties will be included in the overlay of area code 205 with the new area code, 659?
- A. Every locale now served by area code 205 will be also be served by area code 659 but no one that has a telephone number that begins with a 205-area code will be required to change their number. Future telephone number assignments may come from either 205 or 659 once the new area code is implemented.

