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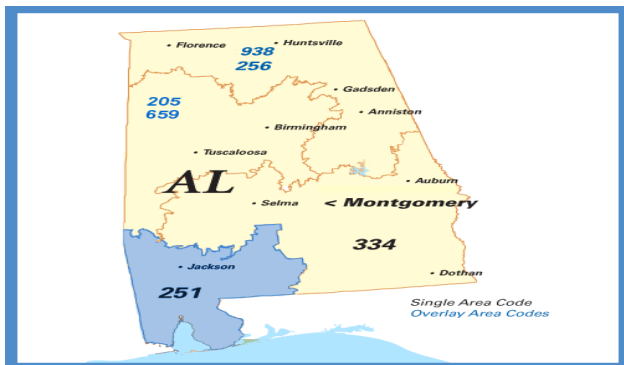
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **NEW DIALING PROCEDURE FOR CUSTOMERS IN THE ALABAMA 251 AREA CODE!**

On July 16, 2020, the FCC adopted an Order (FCC 20-100) approving 988 as the 3-digit abbreviated dialing code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Activation of the new abbreviated dialing code is scheduled for July 16, 2022. The Order requires all telecommunications carriers to ensure their network connects 988 calls to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by the activation date.

Implementation of the 988 abbreviated dialing plan will not affect existing service in those area codes wherein the 988 central office code has not been previously assigned to a telecommunications carrier. Such is the case in area code 334 (South Alabama excluding the Mobile area), where the 988 central office code is unassigned and available to use for abbreviated dialing.

Many geographic calling areas within the U.S. have more than one area code assigned to them. When an additional area code is assigned to a geographic where an area code already exists, the added area code is called an "overlay." Use of the abbreviated 988 dialing code will work in those areas without any network modifications because mandatory 10-digit dialing for all calls was adopted with the implementation of the new area code overlay. The 205 area code surrounding Birmingham (overlaid with area code 659) and the 256 area code surrounding Huntsville (overlaid with area code 938) fall into that category. Both of those geographic areas are unaffected by the adoption of the 988 abbreviated dialing code for connection to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline because telecommunication consumers in those areas are already required to dial the area code plus a 7-digit telephone number to complete local calls.

Nationwide, a significant number of geographic areas wherein only one area code is used and wherein the central office code 988 is already assigned to a telecommunications carrier must convert to mandatory 10-digit dialing so that 988 can be activated as an abbreviated dialing code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Area code 251, in the geographic area surrounding Mobile, falls into that category. Consequently, mandatory 10-digit dialing for all calls (local and long distance) in the 251 area code will begin on October 24, 2021. The FCC ordered the implementation of a plan that transitions consumers from 7-digit calling to mandatory 10-digit dialing in the affected areas.

Beginning **April 24, 2021**, consumers within the 251 area code may start dialing 10-digits (area code + telephone number) for all local calls. This is known as a “permissive dialing period” and is intended as an opportunity for consumers to become accustomed to the new dialing procedures. Local calls dialed using the area code plus the 7-digit number will be completed. Nevertheless, those local calls dialed using only 7-digits will also be completed during this period.

Beginning **October 24, 2021**, all consumers within the 251 area code must dial 10-digits (area code plus the 7-digit telephone number) to complete local calls. On and after this date, local calls dialed with only 7 digits will not be completed, and a recording will inform the caller that their call cannot be completed as dialed. Upon receiving the recording, the caller should simply hang up and re-dial the number using the area code with the 7-digit telephone number.

### ***What other changes need to be made?***

Important safety and security equipment, such as medical alert devices, and alarm and security systems must be programmed to use 10-digit dialing. Many systems operate on 10-digit dialing by default, but some older equipment may still use seven-digits. Please contact your medical alert or security provider if you are unsure whether your equipment needs to be reprogrammed to accommodate the upcoming change to 10-digit local dialing. Any needed reprogramming of alarm and home security equipment must be done during the permissive dialing period from April 24, 2021, to October 24, 2021, to avoid interruption of services.

Some other examples of services that may need to be re-programmed are:

- life safety systems or medical monitoring devices
- PBXs
- fax machines
- Internet dial-up numbers
- fire or burglar alarm and security systems or gates
- speed dialers
- mobile or other wireless phone contact lists
- call forwarding settings
- voicemail services and other similar functions

Be sure to check your website, personal and business stationery, advertising materials, personal and business checks, contact information, your personal or pet ID tags, and other such items to ensure the area code is included.

### ***What will remain the same?***

- Your telephone number, including current area code, will not change.
- The price of a call, coverage area, or other rates and services will not change due to the dialing change.
- What is a local call now will remain a local call regardless of the number of digits dialed.
- You will continue to dial 1+ the area code + telephone number for all long-distance calls.
- You will continue to dial a prefix (such as “9”) when dialing from a multi-line telephone system (e.g., in a hotel, office building, etc.) as required.

- You can still dial just three digits to reach 711 (relay services) and 911 (emergency services).
- If 211, 311, 411, 511, 611, or 811 are currently available in your community, dial these codes with just three digits.
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can still be reached by dialing 1-800-273-TALK (8255) even after the 988 code is in effect.

Beginning **July 16, 2022**, dialing “988” will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Until that date, callers must continue to dial 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) to reach the Lifeline.

***Additional Information***

The North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) website has more information on the transition to 10-digit dialing:

[https://www.nationalnanpa.com/transition to 10 digit dialing for 988/index.html](https://www.nationalnanpa.com/transition%20to%2010%20digit%20dialing%20for%20988/index.html)

Questions may be emailed to NANPA using the address [988@somos.com](mailto:988@somos.com)

Information from the FCC website relative to the activation of the 988 abbreviated dialing code may be found at:

[https://www.fcc.gov/suicide-prevention-hotline.](https://www.fcc.gov/suicide-prevention-hotline)

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