



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 757 Area Code Exhaust Relief

*Case No. PUR-2019-00059*

On April 4, 2019, the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) filed notice with the SCC that the 757 area code in southeastern Virginia is on track to exhaust all available numbers during the fourth quarter of 2021. The application seeks to determine how to alleviate the exhaust issue. Information below includes links to case documents as well as frequently asked questions that help to explain an area code exhaust, the Commission's involvement, what relief options exist, and how the process will work after the SCC investigates and makes a decision.

[Order Appointing Hearing Examiner](#), April 24, 2019

#### **What is area code exhaust?**

When an existing area code, such as 757, nears the assignment of all available phone numbers. In short, we are running out of available numbers under the 757 area code.

#### **What happens when we are close to an area code exhaust?**

The NANPA contacts the Commission and industry to begin the relief planning process. The relief planning process for the 757 area code exhaust began in December 2018. It can take up to 36 months for the entire process to conclude and a new area code to be implemented.

#### **How are the numbering resources being depleted in area code 757?**

Subscriber growth and expansion of services requiring phone numbers eventually exhaust the numbering resources available within an area code. Every cellular provider (this includes tablet devices with cellular service), wireline provider, alarm service provider, and voice over the internet (VoIP) phone service provider is assigned numbers from those available in an area.

#### **Who decides to change my area code?**

The Telecommunication Act of 1996 gave the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) jurisdiction over the telephone numbering plan in the United States. From this authority, the FCC established the NANPA. However, the FCC delegated authority to state regulatory commissions to resolve matters involving implementing new area codes. The actual assignment of any new area code comes from the NANPA.

## What are the options to relieve the 757 area code exhaust situation?

The most common two options are:

- A **geographic split**: This would carve the existing 757 area code zone into two separate areas. One region would retain the 757 area code and the other would convert to a newly assigned second area code.
- An **all-services overlay**: This would superimpose a newly assigned area code over the area currently covered by the existing 757 area code. The entire current 757 area would then be covered by both the 757 area code and the newly assigned area code.

## What are the pros and cons of each option?

### Geographic Split

#### **Pros:**

- Maintains 7-digit dialing in area that remains in the 757 area code

#### **Cons:**

- Half of the current area covered by the 757 area code would have to change their phone numbers
- Financial impact to businesses in new area code
- Customers would need to update family, friends, and business associates with new area code and phone number information
- Requires a longer implementation time by industry and is more costly

### All-Services Overlay

#### **Pros:**

- All existing customers would retain the current 757 area code
- Less confusion and easier education process
- Less financial impact on businesses
- Does not split cities or counties into separate area codes
- Moves customers to universal 10-digit dialing
- Minimizes call routing issues, especially with ported numbers

#### **Cons:**

- Local calls would require 10-digit dialing
- Customers would have to reprogram auto-dialing equipment
- Cost to update signage and printed material from 7-digit to 10-digit

## **If the Commission decides on a geographic split, would existing customers in the newly assigned area code be required to change their phone number?**

Yes.

## **How would an all-services overlay affect customer dialing habits?**

Under an all-services overlay, 10-digit dialing would be a requirement. In a contiguous geographic area where only one area code exists, that area code is assumed to be part of the phone number by default. Number 555-1234, for example, is assigned to only one unique account in a geographic boundary assigned to that single area code. Where two or more area codes are assigned 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. Therefore, additional information (dialing the area code) is required to correctly route calls to the intended call recipient. While this does require the dialing of three additional digits, with today's technology, most of our devices store a majority of our contact information. Therefore, there will be very little change for most individuals.

## **How has Virginia handled this issue in the past?**

In 1996, the 804 area code went through a geographic split, and the 757 area code was first established. On November 23, 1998, the Commission approved an all services overlay which added the 571 area code to the established 703 area code in northern Virginia (Case No. PUC-1996-00161). December 1, 2000, saw the Commission approve a geographic split as the relief method for the 804 area code (Case No. PUC-1999-00159); the western section of the then current 804 area code was assigned a new area code, 434, while the eastern section, including metropolitan Richmond, kept the 804 area code. While the Commission has approved both options, it should be noted that there has not been a geographic split implemented in the United States since 2006 (in New Mexico).

## **Once the Commission makes a decision, what happens?**

A Final Order will be issued by the Commission that also approves or modifies the requested schedule for implementing the approved plan. Education will be provided in the 757 area by both the NANPA and the Commission.

## **How can I comment on the issues raised by this case (Case No. PUR-2019-00059)?**

There are different ways to file comments on this case with the Commission. An Order for Notice and Comment in Case No. PUR-2019-00059, will be issued by the Commission providing notice to the public along with a period of time when comments can be filed in the case (instructions are provided). In addition, comments can be mailed directly to Joel H. Peck, Clerk, State Corporation Commission, c/o Document Control Center, P.O. Box 2118, Richmond, Virginia 23218-2118. Interested persons desiring to submit comments electronically may do so by following the instructions on the Commission's website: <http://www.scc.virginia.gov/case/PublicComments.aspx>. Any comments should refer to Case No. PUR-2019-00059, to ensure the comments are recorded in the correct proceeding at the Commission.

**Who can I contact with any questions?**

If you have questions during the processing of Case No. PUR-2019-00059, contact Nicole Mansfield at 804-371-9613, or Sheree King at 804-371-9707. Both can also be reached via the Commission's toll-free number (within Virginia) at 1-800-552-7945. Select Option 4 for the Division of Public Utility Regulation and ask for Nicole or Sheree.