

State of Florida



# Public Service Commission

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**-M-E-M-O-R-A-N-D-U-M-**

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**DATE:** November 23, 2021

**TO:** Office of Commission Clerk (Teitzman)

**FROM:** Office of Industry Development and Market Analysis (Deas, Fogleman) *CH*  
Office of the General Counsel (Imig) *TLT*

**RE:** Docket No. 20210168-TP – Petition of North American Numbering Plan Administrator on behalf of the Florida telecommunications industry, for approval of consensus decision to recommend to the Commission an all-services overlay as the form of relief for the 561 numbering plan area.

**AGENDA:** 12/07/21 – Regular Agenda – Proposed Agency Action – Interested Persons May Participate

**COMMISSIONERS ASSIGNED:** All Commissioners

**PREHEARING OFFICER:** Passidomo

**CRITICAL DATES:** The estimated exhaust date for the 561 area code is the third quarter of 2023

**SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:** None

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## Case Background

On October 28, 2019, the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA), on behalf of Florida's telecommunications industry (Industry), filed a petition with the Florida Public Service Commission (Commission) for approval of its area code relief plan for the 561 Numbering Plan Area (NPA). The Industry reached a consensus decision to recommend an all-services distributed overlay as the form of relief for the 561 NPA. NANPA projects that the supply of central office codes in the 561 NPA will exhaust during the third quarter of 2023. Consequently, NANPA is also requesting that the Commission approve the recommended 9-month implementation schedule.

NANPA is the neutral third-party administrator of the North American Numbering Plan, which is the area code system shared by the United States, Canada, Bermuda, and 17 Caribbean countries. NANPA's responsibilities include assigning area codes and prefixes, and tracking numbering usage to ensure effective and efficient utilization. NANPA is also responsible for forecasting the exhaust of geographic area codes and area code relief planning. NANPA publishes its forecasted exhaust of all area codes on a semi-annual basis. This forecast is used to determine when to start the area code relief process. The area served by NANPA is divided into NPAs, which are each identified by a three-digit NPA code, commonly called an area code.

The 561 area code was introduced in 1996 when the 407 area code needed relief due to substantial growth in demand for telephone numbers. Since its creation the 561 area code was split once in 2002 to create the 772 area code which serves the Treasure Coast of Florida. Currently, the 561 area code serves Palm Beach, Boca Raton, Wellington, Boynton Beach, Jupiter, Delray Beach, Belle Glade and other smaller communities.

On July 16, 2020, the FCC adopted an Order approving the designation of 988 as the 3-digit abbreviated dialing code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The Order requires all telecommunications carriers, interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) providers, and one-way VoIP providers (covered providers) to make any network changes necessary to ensure that users can dial 988 to reach the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022.<sup>1</sup> This requires all covered providers to implement mandatory 10-digit dialing in NPAs that have assigned 988 as an NXX, which is the first 3-digits of a 7-digit number. Dialing the area code first will prevent calls to numbers with the 988 NXX from being mistakenly directed to the Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Several Florida NPA's, including 561, were identified as needing to transition to 10-digit dialing.

In April 2021, NANPA forecasted that the 561 area code would exhaust during the third quarter of 2024. However, due to an increase in requests for numbering resources in the 561 area code, on September 23, 2021, NANPA revised its forecast to reflect a new exhaust date of third quarter 2023. NANPA convened an industry meeting on October 12, 2021, to review and approve the draft area code relief filing. On October 22, 2021, NANPA filed a petition with the Commission on behalf of the Industry requesting approval of an all services distributed overlay for the 561 area code (see map Attachment A). The Commission has jurisdiction to address this issue pursuant to Section 364.16(7) and 120.80(13)(d), Florida Statutes, and 47 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) § 52.19.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-20-100A1.pdf>.

## Discussion of Issues

**Issue 1:** Should the Commission approve the Industry's consensus recommendation of an all-services distributed overlay as the area code relief plan for the 561 area code?

**Recommendation:** Yes, the Commission should approve the Industry's consensus recommendation of an all-services distributed overlay as the area code relief plan for the 561 area code. (Deas, Fogleman, Imig)

**Staff Analysis:** Area code relief responsibilities have been delegated to the states by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 52.19. In Florida, the Commission is responsible for determining the appropriate form of area code relief when telephone numbers exhaust within an area code. There are a number of methods available to address area code exhaust issues; however, the two most commonly used methods are a geographic split or an overlay.

### Geographic Split

The geographic split method divides the exhausting NPA into two, leaving the existing area code to serve one NPA and assigning a new area code to serve the other NPA. This method generally acknowledges jurisdictional or natural boundaries, but for technical reasons and number optimization considerations, the actual boundaries must conform to existing rate center boundaries. Under this method, customers on both sides of the split would retain seven digit dialing; however, it would require one half of the customers to change their area code. The last split implemented in Florida was 19 years ago. Industry guidelines specify that in the case of a geographic split, the difference in area code life expectancies between the split areas should be 10 years or less.<sup>2</sup>

### Overlay

The overlay method adds a new area code to the same geographic area served by the area code requiring relief. This results in the assignment of more than one area code to the same NPA. Current customers keep their existing area code and number; however, new customers or customers adding additional lines would receive the new area code. Once an overlay is implemented, the FCC requires 10-digit dialing for all local calls within the NPA. There are four potential implementation strategies for an overlay, which are as follows:

**a) All-Services Distributed Overlay** - The distributed overlay strategy may be considered in situations when growth in telephone numbers is expected to be more or less evenly distributed throughout the existing NPA. The new area code is added to the same geographic area as the code requiring relief and shares exactly the same geographic boundaries.

**b) Concentrated Growth Overlay** - A concentrated growth overlay may be considered in situations when the majority of need for the new telephone numbers is expected to be

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<sup>2</sup> NPA Code Relief Planning & Notification Guidelines ATIS-0300061 - Section 5.0 (g).

concentrated in one section of the existing NPA. For example, a fast growing metropolitan area and a sparsely populated rural area could exist within the same NPA. The overlay area code would be assigned initially to the section of the NPA experiencing the fastest growth, and new phone numbers in that section would be assigned from the new area code. As more relief is required, the geographic area served by multiple area codes could expand to the rest of the NPA.

**c) Boundary Elimination Overlay** - With a boundary elimination overlay, the NPA requiring relief is adjacent to an NPA with available numbering resources. The boundary between these NPAs is eliminated, and spare telephone numbers from the adjacent area code are assigned within the NPA boundary where relief is required.

**d) Multiple Overlay** - The multiple overlay strategy may be considered where relief is required in an NPA served by two or more area codes. The new area code would be assigned to overlay the multiple existing area codes serving the entire geographic area. This essentially functions the same as an all-services distributed overlay.

### **Industry Consensus**

NANPA, asserts that based on industry guidelines, only an overlay will meet the requirements for relief of the 561 NPA, which is already scheduled to transition to mandatory 10-digit dialing due to the implementation of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the Industry met on October 12, 2021, and approved an all-services distributed overlay as the recommended form of relief for the 561 area code. According to NANPA, the all-services distributed overlay recommended by industry would provide a projected life of approximately 23 years.

The Industry has also recommended a 9-month implementation schedule. Since the transition to mandatory 10-digit dialing will be in place prior to the implementation of the new area code there will be no permissive dialing period. Therefore, the schedule will only include the necessary network preparation and customer education. At the completion of the network preparation and customer education period, the new area code will be activated. Industry asserts this schedule will allow sufficient time to implement the new area code prior to exhaust of the 561 area code.

### **Proposed Dialing Plan**

If an all-services distributed overlay is approved by the Commission, the Industry recommends the dialing plan be set forth as follows:

Local Calls	10-digit dialing (as required by the FCC)
Toll Calls	1 + 10-digit dialing
Operator Calls	0 + 10-digit dialing

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<sup>3</sup> NPA Code Relief Planning & Notification Guidelines ATIS-0300061 - Section 5.6.3.

### **Staff Workshop**

In an effort to educate and receive customer input, staff held a virtual customer workshop on November 5, 2021. During this workshop Commission staff and a representative from NANPA explained the area code relief process, the relief option being considered, and customer impact. Staff also allotted time for customers to ask questions or give comments. There was no customer input or comment.

### **Conclusion**

Staff reviewed the petition and analyzed the recommended relief option. Staff notes industry guidelines stipulate that when area code relief is required for a single NPA that is transitioning or scheduled to transition to mandatory 10-digit dialing, only an overlay will meet the requirements for relief. The 561 area code, as a result of the implementation of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, is scheduled to complete the transition to mandatory 10-digit dialing prior to the implementation of a relief option. Consequently, in accordance with industry guidelines only an overlay will meet the requirements for relief in the 561 area code. In addition, staff notes an overlay will allow existing customers to retain their current area code and telephone number.

Staff agrees with the Industry and recommends the Commission approve the proposed all-services distributed overlay as the form of relief for the 561 area code. Additionally, staff recommends Commission approval of the proposed 9-month implementation schedule. Finally, staff recommends the Commission approve that central office codes in the new area code be available only when all assignable prefixes in the 561 area code have been assigned.

**Issue 2:** Should this docket be closed?

**Recommendation:** If no person whose substantial interests are affected by the proposed agency action files a protest within 21 days of the issuance of the Proposed Agency Action Order, this docket should be closed upon the issuance of a Consummating Order. (Imig)

**Staff Analysis:** At the conclusion of the protest period, if no protest is filed, this docket should be closed upon the issuance of a Consummating Order.

