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NJ Board of Public Utilities Begins Process of Considering Request for New Area Code Overlay to Provide Relief in the 609 Area Code

- Board orders public hearing and a comment period to hear from potentially affected phone customers –

TRENTON, N.J. – The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (Board) today began the process of considering a request filed by Neustar, the Federal Communications Commission's designated North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA), seeking the implementation of an all-services distributed overlay to provide area code relief for the 609 Numbering Plan Area (NPA) or area code.

In response to Neustar's petition, the Board opened a public comment period to accept written comments until close of business on February 27, 2017, and scheduled a public hearing to be held at 10:00 a.m. on February 23, 2017, in the Merit System Room, 1st Floor, 44 South Clinton Ave. Trenton, N.J.

On December 10, 2013, Neustar filed a petition with the Board requesting permission to enact an all-services distributed overlay to provide area code relief for the 609 area code. Neustar recently informed the Board that the 609 area code exhaustion date - all available phone numbers within the 609 area codes will be in use - has been moved up to the third quarter of 2018. According to Neustar, the original 609 area code exhaustion date in 2019 has been accelerated due to increased demand for numbers in the 609 area code.

The all-services distributed overlay proposed will assign a new, additional area code to the 609 area code geographic area; new requests for phone numbers within the 609 area code will be assigned the new area code. Customers will retain their current telephone number, but be required to change to a 10-digit dialing system within the geographic area, and add 1 to the 10-digit dialing systems when dialing between geographic areas or zones with other area codes.

The telephone industry along with Neustar has recommended an all-services distributed overlay as the least disruptive and most efficient relief plan; does not require the redrawing of existing geographic area code boundaries.

The Board will rule on the petition at a later Board Agenda Meeting after public comment has been received and reviewed. If approved by the Board, an all-services distributed overlay would be phased in over a 15-month period. To ensure impacted customers have a full understanding of the process and impacts, the phase in would begin with a seven-month Network Preparation and Customer Education program.

Also, if approved by the Board, once the overlay is implemented customers will have the option to continue using the 7-digit dialing pattern for a seven-month period of Permissive Dialing before it's necessary to switch to the 10-digit pattern. At the end of the Permissive Dialing period all customers would need to utilize the 10-digit dialing pattern. Actual area code activation would begin one month after the mandatory 10-digit dialing pattern switch occurs.

Should the Board approve the petition, the overlay process will ensure the transition is smooth and that customers do not need to do anything other than familiarize themselves with the new dialing pattern. Once the switch is made, the new area code is predicted to last 46 years.

A notice regarding details of the public hearing and how to submit written comments will be posted on the NJBPU website and published in area newspapers. Written comments should be mailed to Irene Kim Asbury, Secretary of the Board, 44 South Clinton Ave, 3rd Floor, Suite 314, Post Office Box 350, Trenton, NJ 08625-0350. Comments may be sent via email with the subject "609" to board.secretary@bpu.nj.gov. Please note all comments received will be made a part of the formal record of this proceeding and any information submitted will be available to the general public. All written comments must be submitted by February 27, 2017 to be considered.

A customer FAQ document is attached.

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