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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **New Area Code Needed in Western Kentucky** ***PSC opens case to consider whether to overlay or split area code 270***

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Sept. 27, 2012)** – The Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) has opened a proceeding that will lead to the creation of a new area code in all or a portion of the current area code 270, which covers western Kentucky.

In an order issued in late August, the PSC said that it had been notified by the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) that area code 270 is projected to run out of available numbers by the third quarter of 2014. NANPA, which oversees the distribution of phone numbers and assigns area codes, subsequently revised that forecast to project number exhaustion by the first quarter of 2014.

The PSC will consider two options for creating the new area code. A telecommunications industry group convened by NANPA recommended an overlay, which would create a second area code – 364 - in the same territory now covered by area code 270. The second option is a split, which would assign area code 364 to a portion of the current area code 270 territory.

An overlay would permit retention of all current 270 numbers, but would require 10-digit dialing for local calls. A split would retain seven-digit dialing for local calls, but would require both wireless and landline customers within about half the current area code to change their phone numbers.

The PSC will conduct public meetings throughout the area code 270 territory in October to provide information about the options and to receive public comment. The locations and dates of the meetings will be announced in early October.

In addition, PSC staff will be available to make presentations to local governments, chambers of commerce, civic groups and other organizations. To schedule a presentation, contact Andrew Melnykovich, public information officer for the PSC.

This is the second time in six years that the PSC has addressed a projected number shortage in area code 270. A similar proceeding was initiated in July 2006.

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In May 2007, the PSC ordered the creation of a new area code – designated by NANPA as 364 – in the western half of area code 270. Area code 270 was created in 1999 by splitting area code 502.

However, that split never took effect. The projected number exhaustion date for area code 270 was extended several times as the result of changes in the number assignment process and a reduction in demand for new numbers due to a slowing economy.

After postponing the implementation date five times, the PSC in December 2010 rescinded the decision and left area code 270 as is. Area code 364 has been retained for future use in western Kentucky.

The need for new area codes arises when there are no longer enough blocks of new numbers to distribute to telecommunication providers. In area code 270, numbers are distributed in blocks of 1,000, known as NXX-X blocks.

That has not always been the case. Prior to May 2007, numbers in area code 270 were distributed in blocks of 10,000, known as NXX blocks. Because a company may not need to use all of the numbers in a code or block, the use of the smaller groupings reduces the quantity of numbers that are assigned but unused and can slow the pace of number exhaustion.

The PSC in 2001 had requested that the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) change number allocation in area code 270 to the smaller blocks in order to extend the life of the area code. It wasn't until May 2007, a few hours after the PSC issued an order to split the area code, that the FCC granted the request.

Once the number assignment was switched to the smaller blocks, telecommunication providers were required to return unused 1,000-number blocks to NANPA for reallocation. That significantly extended the life of area code 270, leading to the eventual cancellation of the split.

When it cancelled the split, the PSC said all options will be examined when a new area code is needed in the future.

The industry group that recommended the overlay did not support any alternative options and thus did not express a preference for a dividing line in the event that the PSC chooses to split area code 270.

In 2007, the PSC split area code 270 on a north-south line. Cities designated to remain in area code 270 included Bowling Green, Columbia, Glasgow, Elizabethtown and Owensboro. Area code 364 was to cover the western portion of the current area code 270, including the cities of Henderson, Hopkinsville, Madisonville, Murray and Paducah.

There is no assurance that another split would follow the same dividing line.

The PSC has not scheduled an evidentiary hearing in the case, and will not do unless one becomes necessary.

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Public comments addressing the telecommunications industry proposal for an overlay must be submitted to the PSC by November 16.

Anyone wishing to make comments can submit them by mail to the PSC at P.O. Box 615, Frankfort, KY 40602, by fax to 502-564-9625, or by e-mail from the PSC website. Comments also may be submitted in person at the PSC offices.

All records in the case are available on the PSC website, psc.ky.gov. The case number in the current proceeding is 2012-00129. The previous case was 2006-00357.

The PSC is an independent agency attached for administrative purposes to the Energy and Environment Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in Kentucky and has approximately 90 employees.

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**TIMELINE IN THE AREA CODE 270 CASE**

June 2001	PSC petitions FCC for mandatory number pooling in area code 270.
July 2001	NANPA first suggests need for new area code in 270 territory
July 2006	NANPA update triggers PSC case for creation of new area code
May 2007	PSC decides to split area code 270 by creating area code 364 start date is set for April 2008
May 2007	FCC authorizes mandatory number pooling in area code 270
June 2007	PSC postpones split until July 2008 to assess impact of number pooling
Nov. 2007	PSC postpones split until January 2009
May 2008	PSC postpones split until April 2010
June 2009	PSC postpones split until January 2012
April 2010	NANPA says area code 270 no longer in jeopardy of number exhaustion
Aug. 2010	PSC suspends implementation of split and use of area code 364
Oct. 2010	NANPA update shows no need for new area code until late 2014
Dec. 2010	PSC rescinds decision to split area code 270
April 2012	NANPA tells PSC new area code will be needed by third quarter of 2014
Aug. 2012	PSC opens case to consider new area code options – telecommunications industry group recommends overlay
Sept. 2012	NANPA revises projected number exhaustion to first quarter of 2014