



## Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

# CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

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# A Consumer's Guide to Ohio's AREA CODE UPDATE



## The Area Code

The first three digits of a 10-digit telephone number are known as an area code. These numbers represent a specific geographic area in North America. Each area code can support up to 792 combinations of the first three digits of a telephone number (known as an exchange code) and when these combinations are depleted, the area code is said to be exhausted. Once exhausted, a new area code is required. Presently, 12 area codes are used in Ohio: 216, 330/234, 419/567, 440, 513, 614/380, 740/220 and 937.

## Area Code Exhaust

Exhaustion is due to a number of different factors, including:

- ▶ high demand for additional telephone numbers due to the popularity of cellular phones, fax machines, pagers, modems, pay-at-the-pump gasoline stations, ATMs and other telecommunications devices.
- ▶ the method by which numbers are assigned to local telephone companies. Telephone numbers are assigned to local telephone companies in blocks of 10,000.

Presently, if a local company does not have a need for that many numbers, the numbers go unused.

Additional codes will continue to be created in response to these factors.

## The Process

The North American Numbering Plan Administration (NANPA at [www.nanpa.com](http://www.nanpa.com)) is responsible for predicting when an area code in Ohio will become exhausted. When a prediction is made, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) is notified.

The PUCO then creates a planning team to develop solutions for that affected area code based in part upon public input.

Those solutions typically take one of two forms: a geographic split or an overlay. A **geographic split** occurs when the geographic area of an existing area code is divided into two or more new areas, each having an area code of its own.

An **overlay** involves using the same geographic area of an existing area code, but assigning all new telephone lines to a new area code. As a result of an overlay,

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The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at [www.occ.ohio.gov](http://www.occ.ohio.gov).



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the same geographic space has two or more area codes associated with it.

The planning team then submits its options to the PUCO. The PUCO may then hold additional hearings in the affected areas to ensure additional public input. The PUCO will then adopt a plan and submit its recommendation to the NANPA for final approval. The NANPA reviews the plan and then assigns a new area code, as appropriate.

Once approved, the new code is announced to the public. A permissive dialing period is typically used to introduce the code or the old code can be dialed interchangeably for a trial period until the new code is implemented permanently. This allows consumers and businesses to adjust and prepare for the change.

After a few introductory months, dialing the new code becomes mandatory. People who dial the old area code at this point will receive an error recording or a wrong number.

### **If Your Area Code Changes**

Be certain to inform your friends and family, and update your records. Contact your bank, credit card companies, place of employment, etc. to let them know of the change.

Businesses will need to publicize the change. They may also need to look into reprogramming office equipment. In the past, an area code was required to carry a '1' or '0' as its middle digit, but the network was reprogrammed to allow any combination of numbers to be used.

Older equipment will not recognize the new system. Cellular phones may need to be reprogrammed.

## **Current Status of Affected Area Codes**

### **Area Code 937**

A new 326 area code was approved by the PUCO in August 2018 as an overlay in the 937 area code. Permissive 7, 10, or 11 digit dialing to local numbers will began August 10, 2019. Beginning February 8, 2020, customers in the 937 area code must dial 10- or 11-digit phone numbers for all local calls. Long distance dialing has not changed. The new 326 area code will take effect on March 8, 2020.

### **Area Code 513**

A new 283 area code has been assigned to be used as soon as all 513 telephone numbers are in use. Permissive 10-digit dialing began in January 2001. Mandatory 10-digit dialing and use of the 283 area code has been suspended due to a decrease in number assignments.

### **What Is 10-Digit Dialing?**

In the past consumers have dialed seven digits in order to make a local call. With the overlay of new area codes, it has become necessary to dial 10 digits (the area code + the seven digit telephone number) to make local calls in those areas where area code overlays occurred.

When placing local calls to numbers outside of your area code or inside your area code if there has been an overlay, you should use the 10-digit dialing pattern. Customers whose area code has not been subject to an overlay may continue to use seven-digit dialing to place local calls inside their same area code.

The PUCO's website has a map showing Ohio's area codes. It is available at [www.puco.ohio.gov](http://www.puco.ohio.gov).

Remember that your rates will not change - even though you are now dialing three more numbers. If you believe that you are being charged toll charges for numbers that had previously been included in your local charges, please contact the PUCO at 1-800-686-7826.