



Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor

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## PUBLIC FIELD HEARING – BASIC FACTS

**An Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) public field hearing is a formal, legal proceeding.**

- An Administrative Law Judge presides with at least one Commissioner present. A court reporter records testimony.

**The sole purpose of the field hearing is to accept sworn testimony from customers under oath.**

- Commissioners are not allowed to answer questions, as they will weigh the evidence and render a decision.
- OUCC and IURC staff can answer procedural questions on an individual basis.

**Consumers may make sworn oral or written comments for the record.**

- Written and sworn oral comments receive equal consideration.

**No final decisions are made during field hearings.**

## 317 TELEPHONE AREA CODE RELIEF: THE OPTIONS

The supply of available numbers for the **317 area code** is projected to run out in 2017. As a result, a new area code will need to be added. The **Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC)** will determine how to implement the new code.

- Since 1995, new area codes have been implemented in 39 states, most Canadian provinces, and throughout the Caribbean due to technological advances (including wireless phones, fax machines, etc.) that have required much greater use of new telephone numbers.
- In 2000, the 317 area code was projected to run out of numbers in 2002. However, number conservation efforts were introduced at the state level in 2001 and have extended 317's lifespan by more than a decade.

With an **all services overlay**, the new area code would occupy the same area as 317 but would be assigned only to **new** customers and communications devices. The telecommunications industry is recommending this method.

- All consumers who now have 317 numbers would be able to keep their existing phone numbers.
- Ten-digit dialing (area code + number) would be required for all local calls.
- Businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and other customers would not need to reprint signage, stationery, advertising, and/or business cards due to the change.

*All new area codes introduced in the United States since 2008 have been implemented through overlays. These include the 930 area code that will be implemented in southern Indiana in early 2015, overlaying the 812 area. All of Indiana's neighboring states have implemented overlays to varying degrees.*

Before 2008, most area codes in the United States were implemented through geographic splits, including the 765 area code that was split from the 317 region in 1996.

- The 1996 split allowed consumers throughout central Indiana to continue dialing seven digits for local calls.
- However, all consumers in the 765 area were required to change numbers and inform contacts outside the area about their new numbers.
- The split also required businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and other entities in the area changing to 765 to reprint signage, stationery, advertising, and/or business cards, and to incur the costs of doing so.
  - While an overlay allows customers to avoid those types of costs, it may require customers to update speed-dialed or pre-programmed numbers with seven digits.

**Area code changes (regardless of method) do not affect:**

- Telephone rates and charges
- Local calling areas (in other words, calls that are now free will remain free)
- 911, 811 and 211 services

**A decision is expected in 2015. It will be followed by a grace period** allowing consumers adequate time to update communications systems and transition to the new dialing pattern. Telecommunications companies typically have six months to make any necessary programming, equipment, and/or network changes.

## **317 AREA CODE RELIEF: THE PENDING CASE**

The **North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA)** oversees and assigns telephone area codes in the United States. NANPA filed a petition and exhibits seeking relief for the 317 area with the IURC on July 10, 2014.

The petition:

- Recommends the use of an all services overlay for the entire 317 area.
- Describes a “concentrated overlay” option (covering part of the 317 area) as a possible alternative, but does not recommend it for a variety of reasons.
- Does not offer a geographic split as a possible alternative.

The 317 area code presents several challenges that would likely make the implementation of a concentrated overlay or geographic split problematic:

- Telephone exchange boundaries do not always align with municipal boundaries and county lines. For example, the Indianapolis exchange area includes portions of Hamilton and Hendricks Counties near the Marion County line. At the same time, much of the Castleton area in Marion County is in the Fishers exchange area, with the south side of Indianapolis divided among the exchange areas for Indianapolis, Greenwood, West Newton and Acton.
- According to NANPA data, an all-services overlay for the entire 317 region would have a life span of 49 years. In contrast, the projected life spans for each area code under a concentrated overlay or geographic split would be out of proportion to each other.

**The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC)** is a separate state agency from the IURC, and is the statutory representative for the interests of all consumers (residential, commercial and industrial) in IURC cases. The OUCC is scheduled to file written testimony on **January 6, 2015**.

An IURC technical evidentiary hearing is scheduled to start on **February 10, 2015** in Indianapolis. Evidentiary hearings are open to the public but participation is typically limited to attorney cross-examination and Commission questioning of technical witnesses who have filed written testimony. The case's formal parties will file proposed orders, the equivalent of closing arguments, with the Commission on **dates to be determined** after the February hearing.

IURC final orders are issued at the Commission's weekly Conferences. Conferences are typically held on Wednesday afternoons, with agendas posted 48 hours in advance at: [www.in.gov/iurc/2428.htm](http://www.in.gov/iurc/2428.htm).

After an order is issued, the new area code will be phased in over a grace period of several months.

All hearing and filing dates are subject to change. A settlement agreement is possible in any legal proceeding.

## **TO LEARN MORE**

All publicly filed documents in this case are available on the IURC Website:

- Visit [www.in.gov/iurc](http://www.in.gov/iurc)
- Click the "Electronic Document System" link in the upper right portion of the page
- Click the "Search Cases" link near the upper left corner of the following page
- Enter docket number 44513 in the first field on the search page

Case updates are also available on the OUCC Website at [www.in.gov/oucc/2800.htm](http://www.in.gov/oucc/2800.htm).

## **GENERAL AGENCY INFORMATION**

### **Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC)**

- State agency
- Represents the interests of all Indiana utility consumers – including residential, commercial and industrial customer interests – in cases before the IURC and federal utility regulatory commissions
- Staff of attorneys, accountants, engineers, economists, consumer services and support personnel

### **Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC)**

- State agency
- Regulates many, but not all, Indiana utilities. Regulates utility rates, financing, service territory, quality, etc.
- Required by law to make decisions that balance the interests of utilities and consumers