

# UTILI-FACTS

## Area Codes

Area codes are in demand due to the increasing use of cell phones, fax machines, modems, alarm systems, and pagers. Texas currently has 25 area codes.



### Who has authority over area codes?

Ultimately, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has jurisdiction over telephone number administration in the United States. However, after the Federal Telecommunications Act passed in 1996,

the FCC authorized states to address matters involving new area codes. Area codes do not cross state lines, so each state has the authority to decide when and in what form to introduce new area codes. In Texas, the authority lies with the Public Utility Commission (PUC).

### Who decides when a new area code is needed?

The North American Numbering Plan Administration (NANPA) studies historic growth, makes projections for future growth, and notifies the PUC when a new area code is needed. The affected area code is considered to be nearing "exhaust."

### What happens after NANPA notifies the PUC a new area code is needed?

The PUC will generally conduct public meetings to discuss the options for the area code region nearing "exhaust." Public comment is welcomed. The PUC can accept, reject, or modify the NANPA recommendations.

### Who decides what the new area code will be?

NANPA assigns new area codes for the entire nation. After receiving the PUC's decision regarding the area code nearing "exhaust," NANPA determines what the new area code will be and informs the PUC. It is up to the PUC to notify the public.

### How is the new area code implemented?

The new area code will be implemented in one of two ways, either through a Geographic Split or an Overlay. In a geographic split, the area code region is divided. One region keeps the existing area code, while the other region is assigned the new area code. For an overlay, the new area code is placed over the same geo-graphic region, or portion of region, creating two or more area codes. New customers are assigned the new area code, while existing customers keep the original area code. All customers must dial 10 digits to place local call.

### What do I need to do if I get a new area code?

You will need to make sure that all of your personal information is updated with the new area code. This includes changing all printed materials, such as stationery or checks, reprogramming speed dial numbers, and updating personal and professional address books. Also, if you have a home alarm system, you should contact your provider to see if your system needs to be reprogrammed.

### Who can I call if I have more questions about a new area code?

Call your local phone company. If your questions are not answered, contact the PUC.

#### QUESTIONS:

Call: 1-888-782-8477, in Austin 512-936-7120  
(TTY 512-936-7136) (FAX 512-936-7003)

Write: PUC - Consumer Protection Division  
P.O. Box 13326, Austin, TX 78711-3326

Online: <http://www.puc.texas.gov/consumer/complaint/Complaint.aspx>

