

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
UTILITIES COMMISSION  
RALEIGH**

**News Release**

**For Release:            March 13, 2001**

**For More Information, Please Contact:**

<b>Switzon Wigfall</b>	<b>919-733-2924</b>
<b>Mary Steel</b>	<b>919-733-0846</b>
<b>Daniel Long</b>	<b>919-733-0835</b>

**NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION APPROVES OVERLAY  
FOR AREA CODE 919**

The North Carolina Utilities Commission (NCUC) today approved North Carolina's second "overlay" area code, this time to be applied to the area now served by area code 919. The NCUC had previously in 1999 authorized an overlay for area code 704, for which mandatory 10-digit local dialing becomes effective March 15, 2001.

The NCUC stressed in its Order that although the relief plan selected is an overlay, the Commission's goal and intent is to prolong the life of 919 by extensive conservation measures (specifically thousands-block number pooling), and thereby postpone for as long as possible use of the overlay area code as well as mandatory 10-digit local dialing. The Commission further noted its intention to issue an order in the near future addressing thousands-block number pooling for the 919 area code.

Under an overlay, the 919 geographic area will have two area codes. All existing telephone numbers will continue to have the 919 area code, but new requests for telephone numbers will be assigned the new area code. Under Federal Communication Commission requirements, in areas with two area codes, all local calls will be dialed with ten digits. The cost of local calls will not be affected.

The process of adding a new area code began with the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) determination that the 919 area code was in "jeopardy," meaning that available telephone numbers would exhaust unless actions were taken. NANPA will also determine the new area code number (which is not known at this time) and coordinate implementation issues with the NCUC and telecommunications providers. The NCUC noted that the advent of new technologies and more competitors in the marketplace was the driving force behind the need for a new area code.

Coupled with the overlay order, the NCUC signaled its intent to implement where possible vigorous number conservation and reclamation efforts directed to the various carriers, so as to stave off as long as feasible the advent of mandatory ten-digit local dialing. The NCUC also called for extensive educational efforts regarding the new area code and the overlay for the general population and singled out the alarm industry for particular attention. Earlier this year, concerns about the preparedness of the alarm industry hindered planning and implementation of the overlay in the 704 area code.

The NCUC chose the overlay option over the geographic split not because it was the ideal option--there were no ideal options--but because it spared current customers in the 919 area code from the inconvenient and expensive prospect of revising their telephone numbers. The NCUC noted that, to adhere to the geographic split option would, over time, mean more geographic splits into smaller and smaller areas, resulting in ten-digit dialing in any event.

The schedule for full implementation of the overlay in the 919 area code is yet to be determined by the Commission. The NCUC has directed the industry and other interested parties to consult among themselves and to provide the Commission with an advisory "Implementation Report" within the next 30 days. That Report will form the basis for a later implementation order to be issued by the NCUC. Such an order commonly provides for extensive education efforts directed to subscribers and to certain affected groups such as alarm companies. The NCUC is expected to provide for a "permissive" dialing period where either a seven-digit or ten-digit dialing calls will be completed before mandatory ten-digit dialing commences.

For more detailed information about area code overlays and area code relief in general or to see the text of the Commission's Order, you may visit the NCUC's website at [www.ncuc.commerce.state.nc.us](http://www.ncuc.commerce.state.nc.us).