

**PUBLIC (REDACTED) VERSION**

STATE OF MAINE  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

December 1, 2021

Docket No. 2021-00212

MAINE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
Investigation into Verizon Wireless's  
Growth Numbering Resources 47 CFR  
52.15(g)(4)

ORDER

BARTLETT, Chair; DAVIS and SCULLY, Commissioners

---

**I. SUMMARY**

By this Order, the Commission closes its investigation into the growth numbering resources and number forecasting practices of Verizon Wireless (Verizon or the Company) in accordance with 47 CFR 52.15(g)(4).

**II. BACKGROUND**

As the Commission stated in its August 3, 2021 Notice of Investigation in this matter, telephone numbers are a finite resource and the available telephone numbers in Maine's single area code, 207, are dwindling rapidly. According to the most recent North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) forecast from October 2021, the 207 area code could exhaust as soon as the 1st Quarter of 2025.<sup>1</sup> Given the impending exhaustion of 207, Commission Staff undertook a review of number resource requests from carriers that request numbering resources in Maine.

In particular, Staff examined requests from Verizon as Verizon is one of the largest consumers of numbering resources in Maine. Staff examined Verizon's numbering requests for a study period from January 2020 through June 18, 2021. Staff discovered that during the review period, Verizon requested a significant number of blocks of 1000 numbers from the numbering pool based on the Company's forecasted numbering needs.<sup>2</sup> Staff also discovered that Verizon only put a fraction of those blocks into service. Due to the volume of Verizon's 1,000-block requests, in certain areas Verizon requested more blocks than were available and as a result new central office codes (or "NXX" codes), each comprising 10 one-thousand number blocks, had to be put into service. It is the elimination of these NXX codes from the numbering pool that is rapidly leading to the exhaustion of the 207 area code.

During the review period, Verizon also returned a substantial portion of the blocks it had requested because, despite its forecasted numbering needs, it did not put numbers in those blocks into service within a six-month time period. This example of

---

<sup>1</sup> NANPA is the neutral administrator of numbering resources, subject to directives from the Federal Communication Commission (FCC).

<sup>2</sup> The NANPA assigns numbers to carriers in blocks of 1000 numbers each.

Verizon's forecasting highlights the challenge the 207-pool faces as forecasted numbering resources are tied up for up to six months from the date a block is assigned to a provider. If enough capacity is tied up from a single request, then a new NXX code from Maine's ever dwindling supply of such codes may need to be issued to meet demand from other carriers needing a new block from the same rate center. These "false shortages" are a significant driver of area code exhaustion in Maine.

In addition, Staff reviewed Verizon's August 2021 number usage forecast for Maine, which appeared aggressive. If Verizon were to have received numbers from the pool in accordance with its forecast, it would have consumed a significant portion of the 39 remaining Maine NXX codes and potentially accelerated the already fast-approaching exhaustion of the 207 area code.

Based on Staff's review, on August 3, 2021, the Commission opened an investigation into Verizon's number forecasting practices. While the Commission has limited authority to require Verizon to take specific actions regarding its number forecasting or utilization, the Commission does have the authority to request a "for cause" audit by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to determine if there is a violation of FCC rules, orders, or applicable industry guidelines. Although the Commission declined to exercise that option at that time, the Commission did direct Verizon to comply with a state-level investigation into its numbering practices.

As a part of its investigation, in the August 3, 2021 Notice of Investigation, the Commission requested that Verizon provide specific information to the Commission regarding the Company's numbering inventory, number utilization, and numbering practices. Verizon provided the requested information on August 20, 2021.<sup>3</sup>

On November 3, 2021, the Hearing Examiners issued an Examiners' Report. The Examiners recommended that the Commission close the investigation into this matter. Both the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) and Verizon filed comments on the Examiners' Report. Neither the OPA nor Verizon objected to the Commission closing this investigation.

### III. DISCUSSION

Verizon, like any other carrier authorized to receive numbering resources, can request numbering resources when their utilization threshold reaches 75% in a rate center.<sup>4</sup> Such applications should also include a Months-to-Exhaust (MTE) Worksheet that provides utilization by rate center for the preceding six months and projected monthly utilization for the next 12 months, and the applicant's current numbering

---

<sup>3</sup> After discussions with Staff, Verizon agreed to limit the amount of material in the August 20, 2021 responses that would be subject to confidential protection. Verizon filed a revised version of its responses on October 21, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> 47 C.F.R. § 52.15(h).

resource utilization level for the rate center in which it is seeking growth numbering resources.<sup>5</sup>

As discussed in the August 3, 2021 Notice of Investigation, during the study period examined by Staff, the company appeared to be creating unrealistic MTE forecasts based on the Company's actual market demand. Because the numbering rules do not require any quantifiable evidence to support forecasted demand, the NANPA and the Commission must take the Company's word that it intends to utilize the numbering resources it is requesting.

In explaining its forecasting practices, Verizon stated that when it makes a forecast, that forecast is the result of several factors, including [REDACTED]. These factors combined may lead to a forecast that is greater than historical demand. Regarding the August 2021 forecast that appeared to be particularly aggressive and led to the opening of this investigation, Verizon stated that this forecast was the result of an inadvertent error by the Company. Verizon subsequently corrected that forecast to reflect growth more in line with its past numbering history.

Since the opening of this investigation, Verizon has been working with Commission Staff regarding its number conservation efforts and has made forecasts more in line with its past numbering history and more moderate than the forecasts from earlier this year. These efforts have helped Staff to continue its work in forestalling the imposition of a new area code in Maine.

Based on Verizon's cooperation in this investigation, the information provided to the Commission by Verizon, and Verizon's recognition and correction of its forecasting error, the Commission declines to investigate this matter further. In addition, the Commission declines, at this time, to request that the FCC begin a for-cause audit of Verizon's numbering practices. Commission Staff will continue to closely monitor the numbering forecasts of all providers utilizing Maine's numbering resources, and the Commission will continue to take appropriate steps to preserve the continuation of Maine's single, 207 area code.

---

<sup>5</sup> 47 C.F.R. § 52.15(i).

**IV. ORDERING PARAGRAPH**

In light of the foregoing, the Commission

**O R D E R S**

That the investigation in Docket No. 2021-00212 is closed.

Dated at Hallowell, Maine, this First Day of December, 2021

**BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION**

*/s/ Harry Lanphear*

Administrative Director

COMMISSIONERS VOTING FOR:     Bartlett  
   Davis  
   Scully

## NOTICE OF RIGHTS TO REVIEW OR APPEAL

5 M.R.S. § 9061 requires the Public Utilities Commission to give each party at the conclusion of an adjudicatory proceeding written notice of the party's rights to seek review of or to appeal the Commission's decision. The methods of review or appeal of Commission decisions at the conclusion of an adjudicatory proceeding are as follows:

1. Reconsideration of the Commission's Order may be requested under Section 11(D) of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure (65-407 C.M.R. ch. 110) within **20** days of the date of the Order by filing a petition with the Commission stating the grounds upon which reconsideration is sought. Any petition not granted within **20** days from the date of filing is denied.
2. Appeal of a final decision of the Commission may be taken to the Law Court by filing, within **21** days of the date of the Order, a Notice of Appeal with the Administrative Director of the Commission, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S. § 1320(1)-(4) and the Maine Rules of Appellate Procedure.
3. Additional court review of constitutional issues or issues involving the justness or reasonableness of rates may be had by the filing of an appeal with the Law Court, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S. § 1320(5).

Pursuant to 5 M.R.S. § 8058 and 35-A M.R.S. § 1320(6), review of Commission Rules is subject to the jurisdiction of the Superior Court.

Note: The attachment of this Notice to a document does not indicate the Commission's view that the particular document may be subject to review or appeal. Similarly, the failure of the Commission to attach a copy of this Notice to a document does not indicate the Commission's view that the document is not subject to review or appeal.