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>From: John Desmond
>Subject: Area Code Article

Patrick, I just came across this in my new issue of [Telephony] and thought it would be of interest to the Telcom Digest group. In my opinion it is a very well written article. There is a lot of interesting information in this short article.

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DIALING AWAY U.S. AREA CODES
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Assistant Editor

The current endangered species in the news may not be an animal at all. The number of available area codes in the United States is dwindling rapidly. Chicago consumed a new code Nov. 11 and New Jersey will gobble up another one on Jan. 1.

There are only nine codes left, and they are expected to be used up by 1995, said Robert McAlesse, North American Numbering Plan administrator and member of Bellcore's technical staff.

"In 1947 (Bellcore) started with 86 codes, and they projected exhaustion in 100 to 150 years. They were off by a few years," McAlesse said.

When the 152 available codes are exhausted, Bellcore will use a new plan for creating area codes.

A total of 138 codes already are assigned. Five of the remaining 14 codes are reserved for service access codes, and 9 are for geographic area codes.

Under the current plan, a 0 or a 1 is used as the second digit while the first and last digits can range between 2 and 9. Under the new plan the first digit will be between 2 and 9 and the following two digits will be numbers between 0 and 9, McAlesse said.

The new plan will create 640 potential area codes, he said. Bellcore isn't predicting when the newly created codes

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will run out.

"The growth in new services and increase in the number of telephones are exhausting the codes. The biggest [increases] are cellular telephones, pagers, facsimile machines and new services that can have more than one number," McAlesse said.

The current unassigned codes include 210, 310, 410, 706, 810, 905, 909, 910 and 917. The Chicago area took the 708 code, and New Jersey will take 908.

In the Chicago metropolitan area, the suburbs were switched from the 312 area code to the new 708 code. Residents and businesses within the city limits retained the 312 code.

Illinois Bell started preparing for the change two years ago with the announcements alerting business customers to change stationary and business cards, said Gloria Pope, an Illinois Bell spokeswoman. Now the telco is targeting the residential market with billboard reminders and billing inserts.

The cost of technically preparing for the new code, including labor, is expected to reach \$15 million. But Pope said that does not include mailings, public relations efforts and business packages designed to smooth out the transition. The telco will absorb the cost with budgeted funds, and no rate increase is expected, she said.

Modifying the network to recognize the new code started about six months ago with translation work. Every central office in the Chicago Metropolitan area was adapted with a new foreign-area translator to accept the new code and route the calls correctly, said Audrey Brooks, area manager-Chicago translations.

The long distance carriers were ready for the code's debut. AT&T, US Sprint and MCI changed their computer systems to recognize the new code before the Chicago deadline.

"We are anticipating a pretty smooth transfer," said Karen Rayl, US Sprint spokeswoman.

Businesses will need to adjust their PBX software, according to AT&T technical specialist Craig Hoopman. "This could affect virtually every nationwide PBX," he said. Modern PBX's will take about 15 minutes to adjust while older switches could take four hours. In many cases, customers can make the changes themselves, he said. [END]

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