

For Immediate Release

Contact: Chris Puyear
christopher.puyear@mt.gov
(C): 406-431-2499

November 28, 2017

PSC actions extend life of “406” area code

Helena, Mont. – Montana will remain the “406” for a while longer thanks in part to the Montana Public Service Commission’s efforts to ensure phone numbers are allocated more efficiently across the state. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) officials informed the Commission Monday that the state’s single area code is expected to last into the 2030s.

“The 406 area code is a unique part of our heritage in Montana,” said Bob Lake, R-Hamilton. “It’s become such an integral part of our state’s identity that some businesses have built their entire brand around the novelty of our single area code.”

Unbeknownst to many, Montana’s lone 406 area code, a point of pride across the state, is at risk of exhaustion.

Population increases plus the explosion of cellphone subscriptions combined with correlating phone number growth will eventually force the state of Montana to adopt an additional three-digit area code. There are currently 1 million cell phone subscribers in Montana compared to 400,000 landline customers.

Four years ago the state’s 406 area code was expected to exhaust by 2019. Today, because of actions taken by the PSC in partnership with Montana telecommunication companies to more efficiently distribute numbers across the state, the FCC predicts that 406 could remain Montana’s exclusive area code into 2031.

Lake credits a 2013 PSC order dramatically extending the lifespan of the 406 area code. That order implemented a policy known as “mandatory number-pooling,” which requires existing telecommunication carriers to make available numbers they are not using and limits the amount of additional telephone numbers that can be assigned to new providers or providers requesting additional numbers.

“Basically it ensures that carriers are not sitting on a bunch of unused numbers, which could hasten the area code exhaustion date,” he said.

The FCC requires planning for a new area code to begin three years in advance of the forecast area code exhaustion date.

Montana is one of 12 remaining states with a single area code.

To view the PSC's 2013 order requiring mandatory number pooling, visit: <http://bit.ly/1NDJXQs>

###

For PSC updates please follow us on twitter. , and "like" our Facebook page [Montana PSC](#)

Made up of five elected commissioners, the PSC works to ensure that Montanans receive safe and reliable service from regulated public utilities while paying reasonable rates. Utilities regulated by the PSC generally include private investor-owned natural gas, electric, telephone, water, and sewer companies. In addition, the PSC regulates certain motor carriers, and oversees natural gas pipeline safety and intrastate railroad safety.