



Area Code Overlay: What It Means for Your Business Number

Get a business phone number with a simple auto attendant menu from Auto Attendant. A caller picks who they need and the call rings that person's own mobile, so nobody on your team has to publish a personal number.

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What an area code overlay is, in one paragraph

An area code overlay adds a second (or third, or sixth) area code to the same geographic area as an existing one. California's utility regulator describes it plainly: multiple area codes co-exist in the same region, people with existing numbers "will retain their current telephone number(s) and area code," and new numbers may be issued in the new code ([CPUC area code FAQ](#)). The price of that convenience is that everyone in the area dials ten digits for local calls.

If you run a business in an area that has just been told "a new area code is coming," the short version is: your number does not change, your customers can still reach you, and you have a small list of equipment, settings and printed material to check. This guide walks through that list, explains the rule behind it, and shows which overlays are scheduled in Canada and the US as of October 2026.

This is general information, not legal or engineering advice for your specific setup.

Overlay, split or boundary change: the three ways a new code arrives

US federal rules name three ways to introduce a new area code ([47 CFR 52.19\(c\)](#)):

Method	What happens	Does any existing number change?	Dialing
Geographic split	The area is divided; one part keeps the old code, the other gets a new one	Yes, for everyone in the part that gets the new code	Seven-digit local dialing can survive inside each code
Boundary realignment	The border between two adjacent codes shifts so spare prefixes can be reused	Possibly, near the border	Usually unchanged
All-services overlay	A new code serves the same area as the existing code(s)	No	Ten digits for every local call

State commissions decide which method is used in their state, along with boundaries and dates ([47 CFR 52.19\(a\)](#)). In Canada the choice is now settled: the CRTC noted in October 2025 that "the only relief measure now considered in Canada is the distributed overlay method," which "does not require customers to change their telephone numbers" ([Telecom Decision CRTC 2025-269, para. 6](#)). The Canadian Numbering Administrator's FAQ says the same in its own words: with an overlay, "mandatory customer number changes within the affected overlay relief area are eliminated" ([CNAC FAQ](#)).

So when you hear "new area code" today, in either country, it almost always means an overlay.

What changes for your business, and what does not

Question	Answer	Source
Does my phone number change?	No. Your number, including the area code, stays the same	FCC
Can customers still call me the same way?	Yes, but they must dial all ten digits, even from the same area code	FCC
Do local calls become long distance?	No. "Calls that were local before the area code change will remain local calls"	CPUC Q21
Does the price of a call change?	No, according to the California regulator; AT&T says new codes won't affect the price of calls on its network	CPUC Q20, AT&T
Does 911 change?	No, you still dial three digits	CPUC Q14
Will a new line or new number get the new code?	Most likely, once the old code's prefixes run out	CPUC
Who pays to update equipment and advertising?	The customer. "Individual consumers are responsible for these costs"	CPUC Q19

The practical work, then, is entirely on your side of the line: anything that dials out with seven digits, and anything that shows your number without its area code.

The 10-digit dialing rule and why it exists

The US rule is short. No area code overlay may be implemented "unless there exists, at the time of implementation, mandatory ten-digit dialing for every telephone call within and between all area codes in the geographic area covered by the overlay area code" ([47 CFR 52.19\(c\)\(3\)\(ii\)](#)). The reason is fairness: if old-code customers could keep dialing seven digits while new-code customers could not, the newer numbers would be at a disadvantage.

Two details matter for planning:

- **Some areas need 1 + ten digits.** The FCC notes that in California, some parts of Michigan and Illinois area code 708, you may have to dial "1" before the area code for local calls ([FCC ten-digit dialing guide](#)). The California regulator's overlay FAQ describes the local dialing pattern as 1 + area code + number ([CPUC Q12-13](#)).

- **There is often a grace period.** CNAC defines a "permissive dialling period" as the window, starting with the new code, when both old and new dialing work; it ends on the mandatory dialing date ([CNAC FAQ](#)). Plan to finish your changes before that period ends, not after calls start failing.

Many areas already dial ten digits. As part of the 988 crisis-line rollout, more than 80 US area codes had to move to 10-digit dialing by July 16, 2022 ([FCC](#)), and in Alberta mandatory ten-digit local dialing became universal when 587 arrived in September 2008 ([CNAC Alberta relief proposal](#)). If your area already dials ten digits, a new overlay changes nothing about dialing; you only need to think about new numbers.

Phone-system checklist before the overlay date

The FCC's advice to businesses is one line: if your company uses a PBX or VoIP phone system, "you may need to update or reprogram it for 10-digit dialing" ([FCC](#)). The California regulator's business checklist is more specific: notify alarm service providers, reprogram call-forwarding, automatic-dial and speed-dial features, and update printed and online material ([CPUC Q18](#)). AT&T adds that "automatic calling equipment, other devices, and services that call stored 7-digit numbers need to be updated" ([AT&T](#)).

Turned into a working checklist:

#	Item	What to check	Who usually does it
1	Desk phones and PBX dial plan	Local calls are not stripped to seven digits; an outside-line prefix plus ten digits works	Your phone provider or installer
2	Speed dials and stored contacts	Every saved number has its area code, on desk phones, mobiles and softphone apps	Each staff member
3	Call forwarding	Forward-to numbers on desk lines and mobiles are stored as ten digits	Whoever set up forwarding
4	Phone menu and ring targets	Any number your auto attendant or hunt group rings is entered in full; a greeting that reads out a number says the area code	Whoever manages the menu
5	Alarm and security panels	The monitoring centre number the panel dials is ten digits; ask the alarm company to confirm	Alarm vendor
6	Dial-up devices	Any modem, older card terminal or device that dials out	Device vendor
7	Automatic diallers and reminder systems	Appointment-reminder tools and CRMs store and dial ten digits	Software vendor or admin
8	Test calls	Call a same-area number with ten digits from each phone and device after the change	Office manager

On item 4: most hosted menus already require a full number for each phone they ring, often in the international +1 format, so they are rarely the problem. The risk is older equipment on the premises and anything someone programmed years ago.

Keep a note of which items you checked and when. If something fails on the mandatory date, that list shortens the search.

Signage, print and online listings

The California regulator is direct about who handles advertising: "Each customer is responsible for telephone numbers appearing in any display advertising" ([CPUC Q9](#)). Its overlay checklist for businesses lists stationery, checks, business cards, advertisements, promotional items, brochures, web pages and catalogs ([CPUC Q18](#)).

A quick audit:

- **Website:** header, footer, contact page, and any tel: links. A tel: link should carry the full number (for example tel:+15145550123).
- **Online listings:** your Google Business Profile, map listings, review sites, industry directories.
- **Printed material:** business cards, letterhead, invoices, quotes, menus, vehicle lettering, window decals, yard signs.
- **Email signatures** for every staff member.
- **Recorded greetings** that read out a number ("call us back at 555-0123") need the area code added.

If you have been printing seven-digit numbers to look "local," an overlay is the moment to stop. With ten-digit dialing in force, a seven-digit number on a sign is an incomplete number.

Should you get a number in the new area code?

Existing numbers keep their code. New service in an overlay area will "most likely receive the new area code" ([CPUC Q8](#)), so a business opening a second line or a new location may end up with the newer code whether it wants it or not.

How to think about it:

Situation	Practical choice
You already have a number customers know	Keep it. An overlay never forces a change, and moving providers within the same area normally lets you keep the number through local number portability (CPUC)
You need a new number and the old code is still available	Take it if you like, but don't pay extra for it; calls cost the same either way (CPUC Q20)
Only new-code numbers are offered	Accept it. Within the overlay area it is just as local
You want one number for several cities	Consider a toll-free number instead of chasing a particular area code

For more on how much an area code matters to callers, see our [guide to choosing a business phone number area code](#).

Canadian overlays happening now (as of October 2026)

Canada adds codes by distributed overlay, and several are scheduled. Dates below are from CRTC decisions and the Canadian Numbering Administrator.

Region	New code	Existing codes	Relief (in-service) date	Source
Eastern Quebec (incl. Québec City, Chicoutimi, Alma)	273	367 / 418 / 581	27 February 2027	CRTC 2025-269 ; CNA PL-632
Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island	851	782 / 902	27 May 2028	CRTC 2026-190 (29 July 2026)
Alberta (province-wide)	568	368 / 403 / 587 / 780 / 825	10 June 2028	CRTC 2026-252 (29 September 2026)
Metro Toronto	942	416 / 437 / 647	In service since 26 April 2025	CNAC news
British Columbia	257	236 / 250 / 604 / 672 / 778	In service since 24 May 2025	CNAC news

Eastern Quebec, in detail. The CRTC approved 273 on 10 October 2025, timing it about nine months before the projected exhaust date of November 2027 ([CRTC 2025-269](#), [paras. 9-12](#)). The administrator's planning letter says the overlay covers 258 exchange areas, and that all local calls in the 273/367/418/581 area "must be dialled with 10-digits" ([PL-632](#), [17 October 2025](#)). Businesses there already dial ten digits, so the change mostly affects which numbers new lines receive after February 2027.

Alberta shows the long-run pattern. The province has been one overlay complex since 587 was added in September 2008; 825 followed in April 2016 and 368 in April 2022, each covering all of Alberta ([CNAC Alberta relief proposal](#)). The same document notes that "currently 10-digit dialling is mandatory for local calls" there and that local dialling will not change with the next code. One overlay is usually followed by another, years later, with no change to existing numbers.

In the US, relief is decided state by state. AT&T keeps a state list of notices; as of October 2026 it shows, for example, a new code for the 657/714 area of California "expected Mar 2027" ([AT&T](#)). Check your carrier's notice or your state commission for the dates in your area. Our [overlay reference page](#) explains how to read the overlay groups in the North American numbering tables.

A simple timeline for the office manager

When	Do this
As soon as the overlay is announced	Run the phone-system checklist above; ask your phone provider and alarm company whether anything on their side changes
Before the permissive period ends (or before the relief date, if you already dial ten digits)	Finish reprogramming; place test calls from every device

When	Do this
Next print run or website edit	Make sure every printed and online number shows ten digits
After the new code goes live	Expect new lines and new numbers to come from the new code; update any internal number lists

FAQ

Will my area code change? No. Under an overlay, "your phone number, including your area code, will not change" ([FCC](#)).

Do local calls cost more after an overlay? No. Local calls stay local, and the California regulator says the cost of a call does not differ because of the change ([CPUC Q20-21](#)).

Does 911 change? No. You still dial three digits ([CPUC Q14](#)).

Do I have to dial 1 first? It depends on the area. In most places ten digits are enough; the FCC names California, parts of Michigan and Illinois 708 as places where you may need 1 + ten digits ([FCC](#)). Your carrier's overlay notice will say.

Will customers think a new-code number is not local? Some may notice an unfamiliar code at first. Within the overlay area the new code reaches the same exchanges at the same price, and after a few years it becomes ordinary, as 587 has in Alberta.

Is an overlay the same as my area being split? No. A split changes the area code for part of the region; an overlay changes no one's number ([47 CFR 52.19\(c\)](#)). See the [glossary](#) for the other numbering terms.

If you are picking a new number in an overlay area, Auto Attendant's number search covers US and Canadian numbers and ranks them by how easy they are to remember.

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Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

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About Auto Attendant

Auto Attendant gives a small business one phone number and a recorded menu that sends each caller to the right person. The call rings the mobile that person already carries, using their normal dialler and their normal mobile plan. Pricing is a single flat monthly fee for the whole company rather than a charge for each user, and there is no app, desk phone or hardware to install.

One number, one menu, the phones you already own

A caller dials the business number, hears a short greeting and chooses an option. Each option can ring one mobile, ring several at once so whoever is free answers first, or try people one after another in a set order. There is no limit on how many people sit on the receiving end, because nobody is billed per seat. Setup is done by the owner in a few minutes: pick a number, write the greeting, and point each option at a mobile.

What it deliberately is not

An auto attendant routes a call; it does not answer one. Nobody at Auto Attendant speaks to callers, and no AI stands in for a receptionist. A business that wants its calls handled, messages taken and appointments booked wants an answering service, which is a different product at a different price. A business that needs call recording, queues, agent dashboards or CRM integration wants a contact centre platform. Auto Attendant is for the case where the call should simply reach the right pocket.

Keeping personal numbers off the internet

The business number is the only number a caller ever sees. Personal mobile numbers are never displayed and never given out, which is what lets an owner put a number on a website, an invoice, a van or a Google Business Profile without handing a personal line to everyone who finds it. An existing advertised number can be ported across and kept, and the old line keeps working while the port is in progress.

Work with Auto Attendant

Visit [Auto Attendant](#) to see [how it works](#), [how it compares](#) to a personal mobile, Google Voice and a full phone platform, and the current [pricing](#).

Telephone number portability, emergency calling and caller-ID rules differ by country and change over time. Articles published here describe general practice and cite primary regulator and carrier sources; they are not a guarantee of any timeline, and they are not legal or regulatory advice for a specific business.

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