

**NEWS RELEASE**

**Jamaicans begin Ten-Digit Dialling on May 31**

**(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2018 June 01):** Ten digit dialling has now come to Jamaica. As of 2018 May 31, telephone users are expected to dial ten digits when calling within Jamaica, as mandatory 10-digit dialling is now in place for Jamaica.

The new dialling format means persons will dial using the current '876' area code plus the seven digit telephone number, for all local calls.

This has become necessary as Jamaica has requested and received an additional Numbering Plan Area (NPA) code, to augment the supply of telephone numbers in Jamaica. So, Jamaica now has two area codes: '876' and '658'. There will be no immediate disbursement of resources under the '658' area code to the telecommunications companies until those under the '876' code are exhausted.

The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR), which is responsible for numbering administration, moved to secure a second area code for Jamaica in order to ensure that enough numbers are available to satisfy growth in demand for these resources over the next ten (10) years. As is the prudent practice in the industry, this is usually at least eighteen (18) months before projected exhaustion of the existing code.

Director General of the OUR Ansord E. Hewitt, in a presentation last month said, "Over the past year and a half, the OUR has embarked on a series of public education activities, geared towards sensitizing citizens as well as business interests about this upcoming change, and its implications for them." He continues, "The OUR had also established an NPA Relief Planning Committee which includes representatives from the telecommunications companies, the Consumer Advisory Committee on Utilities and the Consumer Affairs Commission. This Committee has been spearheading the programme of changes that the introduction of this additional area code necessitates, as well as receiving regular updates from the telecommunications companies about their level of preparedness. The OUR is confident that measures were put in place to ensure a smooth transition to 10-digit dialling on 2018 May 31."

2018 May 31 to October 30 will serve as an adjustment period for permissive dialling. During this time, customers will reach numbers without interruption when the ten (10) digit telephone number (i.e. the current '876' area code plus the seven-digit telephone number) is dialled. If in error or unknowingly, customers dial the usual seven-digit telephone number, the caller will hear a recording reminding him/her to dial using the area code plus the seven-digit telephone number, after which, the call will then be completed.

At the end of the five (5) month permissive dialling period, all local calls will require 10-digit dialling to be completed. The OUR anticipates that during the permissive dialling period telecommunications service providers will continue their efforts to ensure that their customers are fully informed about the changes.

The OUR urges customers who are having difficulty making the transition to 10-digit dialling, to first address their concerns to their telecommunications provider. If the issues are not addressed to their satisfaction, they can contact the OUR's Consumer Affairs Unit at [consumer@our.org.jm](mailto:consumer@our.org.jm).

## **BACKGROUND**

Jamaica's '876' area code was assigned in 1996 June. It was envisaged then, that the area code would provide sufficient numbering capacity for the next 20 years of demand growth. However, in 2009, after just thirteen (13) years, the country had to consider the introduction of an additional Area Code to augment the existing '876' numbering space and, consequently, to move the country from the current standardized seven-digit to a mandatory 10-digit dialling for all local calls. At December 2009, 6.25 million of the assumed capacity of 7.73 million numbers had been assigned to telecommunications service providers and their projected 5-year demand for numbers indicated a need for 1.31 million new numbers over the next three (3) years. Using its **Numbering Resource Utilization and Forecast** survey results, the OUR had estimated that the expected period for the exhaustion of the 876 area code would be the 4th quarter of 2012. However, subsequent developments in the local telecommunications markets (including acquisitions of local telecommunications business operations and the lowering of mobile termination rates) which lowered the utilization of, and demand for numbering resources, served to delay the exhaustion of the 876 area code until the current forecast date. Typically, an additional area code must be implemented at least eighteen (18) months before the exhaustion of the existing area code(s) serving an area.

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