

Revision to the Code of Practice (CoP) relating to the Use of Numbers and Codes in the Hong Kong Numbering Plan

Telecommunications Regulatory Affairs Advisory Committee

8 July 2022



Operators' Management of Fixed or Mobile Numbers Allocated to Them

Proposed addition of a new paragraph 8(g) to make clear that -

Individual Assignment to End Customers

Operators allocated with blocks of fixed numbers (including personal numbers) or mobile numbers should in general assign the allocated numbers direct by themselves to their individual end customers.

Wholesale Assignment to Wholesale Assignees

Where an operator (“Allocatee”) assigns portions of the allocated numbers to other licensed service providers (“Wholesale Assignees”) in Hong Kong or outside Hong Kong, for use by these Wholesale Assignees’ end customers, the Allocatee should –

- only assign additional numbers to a Wholesale Assignee when the numbers used by the latter’s end customers reach a utilisation rate of at least 80%; and
- make necessary arrangement with the Wholesale Assignees to provide the Allocatee with relevant information to ensure its compliance with paragraph 8(c) of the CoP.

Record and Reporting of Use of Fixed or Mobile Numbers Allocated to Operators

Proposed amendments to paragraph 8(c) and addition of paragraph 12 and Appendix 8A to make clear that –

An operator allocated with fixed or mobile numbers should maintain up-to-date record of the allocated numbers including –

- (a) status of **each allocated number** (unassigned, assigned to an active end customer, reserved for an inactive end customer or ported out);
- (b) for **each allocated number ported out**, the operator currently holding the ported-out number; and
- (c) in case of **Wholesale Assignment** –
 - (i) particulars of each Wholesale Assignee (name, address, business registration number or equivalent, and type and number of the licence); and
 - (ii) the numbers assigned to each Wholesale Assignee.

Operators shall furnish to the CA information about use of numbers / codes allocated / assigned to them, in such manner and at such times requested by the CA.

Utilisation Rate Calculation in Applications for Additional Numbers

Proposed revisions to paragraphs 2.24, 2.24(A1) and 2.24(B1) and addition of new paragraphs 2.24(A2) and 2.24(B2) at Appendix 3 on the following -

If an operator (i.e. Allocatee) who has, apart from **Individual Assignment to End Customers**, assigned portions of originally allocated fixed or mobile numbers through **Wholesale Assignment to Wholesale Assignees**, the Allocatee, in making applications for additional numbers, needs to demonstrate that the **utilisation rates for both pools of numbers meet the threshold of 80%**.

Make clear that in the calculations, “customers” should refer to “end customers”.



Short Codes

Checking on use of codes

- Since 2017, the Communications Authority (CA) conducted annual check exercises on the use of the 4-digit 15XX or 16XX short codes assigned to licensees as service access code for the provision of external telecommunications services.
- A total of 41 idle short codes were identified and were withdrawn / returned.
- The CA may from time to time conduct checking on use of different types of allocated / assigned codes (e.g. when processing applications for renewal of licences).

Proposed amendment to Appendix 2 to make clear that -

When a short code is no longer in use, the operator should promptly return the short code to the CA.



Re-allocation of Returned Blocks of Subscriber Numbers Containing Ported Numbers

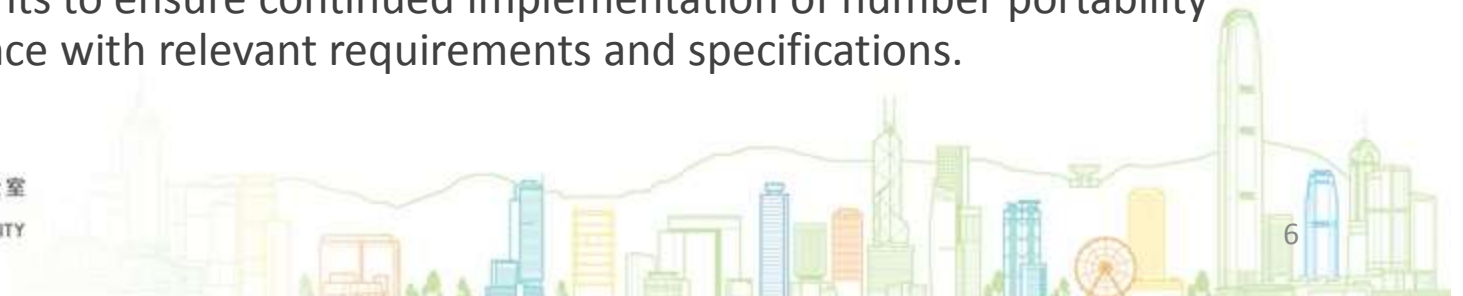
Unallocated number blocks with ported numbers

- 15 blocks of mobile numbers (with leading digit “5”, “6” or “9”) were returned to the CA from 2017 to 2019, containing 600k subscriber numbers, with some of the numbers ported out to other mobile service providers.

Proposed amendment to paragraph 2.3 of Appendix 3 to make it clear that -

Unallocated blocks of fixed or mobile numbers containing ported numbers may also be made available for allocation to eligible licensees applying for additional numbers.

- Licensees allocated with these number blocks should make proper arrangements to ensure continued implementation of number portability in accordance with relevant requirements and specifications.



12-digit “4500X” Numbers for Machine-to-Machine (“M2M”) Services (“M2M numbers”)

Proposed amendment in paragraph 2(d) of Appendix 8 to make clear that –

SMS could be used for conveyance of information or instructions in M2M communications using the M2M numbers as long as the **SMS messages are intended to be read by machines, not human** (for example, encrypted SMS messages for communications with machines).



Way Forward

- Members are invited to give their views and comments on the revised CoP as proposed in the paper.
- OFCA will, after taking into account the comments received, finalise the revised CoP for approval by the CA.
- OFCA will then inform licensees about the administrative arrangement for relevant reporting of statistics by operators allocated with fixed or mobile numbers before the revised CoP takes effect.



Thank you

