

## South Jersey to share 609/640 area code in August

LAUREN CARROLL Staff Writer

The digits 609 are a part of South Jersey's identity, as much as pork roll and boardwalks, but a change to the area's associated area code will come with the new year. Due to a demand for new phone numbers, the region will add a new area code, requiring 10-digit calling.

The new 640 area code will be added to the existing 609 region, including Atlantic, Cape May and parts of Ocean County. While the new area code will not change existing numbers, it will be added as new telephone lines and services are added.

In April 2017, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities approved a plan to overlay 640 to the existing 609 coverage area, after a study found the region would run out of available phone numbers in the third quarter of 2018. Heading into the new year, the BPU is advising residents in the 609 area code region to be prepared to change the way you make a call.

"When calling another number, you will have to dial the area code first, even if it's 609 to 609," said Gregory Reinert, director of communications for the Board of Public Utilities. "You should start getting used to dialing 10 digits."

The dialing procedure primarily affects calls made to and from landline phones. According the Pew Research Center, 95 percent of American adults have at least one cellphone.

Starting Jan. 20, a period of "permissive dialing" will start. According to the BPU, calls within the new 609/640 overlay area code will still be placed if dialed without the area code.

The 10-digit dial procedure will go in effect Aug. 18. Calls without an area code will not be completed.

The 640 area code will be issued for new telephone lines or services starting Sept. 17.

Many South Jersey businesses still advertise without including the area code. Reinert added that the change is very important for automated dialing services used by local and state offices.

"We want to get the message out to public safety or state offices to reprogram speed dialers or call-transferring equipment to the 10-digit area code and phone numbers, so there's no issue going further into the year," Reinert said.

The BPU said in a press release that three-digit special service numbers, including 911 and 411, will remain the same and assured residents that the price of a call, coverage area, or other rates and services will not change.