

What's Your I.D.?

NENA Company Identifiers are an Asset to PSAPs

By NENA Staff

In operation for four years, the NENA Company Identifier Program is a service provided by NENA to all Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers (ILEC), Alternate Local Exchange Carriers (ALEC), PBX/private switch providers, wireless carriers and Resellers. The NENA Company ID (CID) is a unique, five-character alphanumeric code that allows PSAPs to identify the switching carrier for a 9-1-1 caller, and to determine the 24-hour, seven day a week phone number of the company for emergency contact needs.

CID Program Beginnings

The NENA Company ID Program was first established in 1996 at the recommendation of NENA Recommended Standards work groups. Based upon the emerging number of alternate telecommunications providers and the evolution of number portability, it was clear there was a need for standardization of 9-1-1 company identifiers in order to distinguish the relationship between service provider and telephone number. This decision involved two factors:

Speed of identification by PSAPs of dial tone providing companies. Because of the emergence of ALECs and local number portability, when a PSAP needs to quickly contact the 9-1-1 call originating Company for line interrupt, call trace and other emergency actions, the typical use of the NPA-NXX for company identification will no longer be effective. An identifier that can be applied by telephone number was needed to support individual telephone number portability. The above functions force a need for a Company ID that associates a 24-hour access number with each telecommunications company.

Database Management. A CID supports tracking, completeness and accuracy in 9-1-1 data record processing by both the 9-1-1 service provider and the data record source company. It also recognizes that the company providing dial tone and originating a 9-1-1 call may not be the same company that provides the source database record for the telephone number. The NENA CID provides administration and management of discrepancy resolution among multiple companies.

Uses of the CID Program

The Company IDs, which are found on the NENA web site at www.nena9-1-1.org for easy access, are used by PSAPs around the country to determine the company to which a caller's number set belongs. This is extremely important in areas where there are competitive markets among service providers and number portability is in place. Without such a program, dispatchers would receive emergency call information with unfamiliar numbers—with no company association.

Continuing Importance of the NENA Company Identifier Program

The NENA CID program is an important service for new carriers entering the market, areas with local number portability and the ever-increasing mobile society.

The NENA web site provides the listings of about 500 telephone companies including their corresponding Company Identifier, contact names, and phone numbers. It is important that PSAP managers and telecommunicators check the listing of Company IDs often, because as local number portability becomes a reality and more service providers come into the market, dispatchers will begin receiving emergency call information with unfamiliar NENA Company IDs. The NENA Company Identifier program is a resource that can assist dispatchers in correctly identifying and contacting telephone companies in an emergency.

With the increasing number of wireless users, local number portability and new carriers entering the market, the need for the NENA Company Identifier program is higher than ever.

Do You Need a Company ID?

If you are a telephone carrier, reseller, wireless carrier or private switch (PBX), you need to have a NENA Company ID for the important reasons discussed above.

Securing a NENA CID is easy. Just log onto the NENA web site at www.nena.org and click on "Company ID" under "Resources." An online CID order form is ready to be completed and submitted, or you may choose to print and fax the form instead. The most difficult part is choosing your Company ID code. Many companies use a condensed version of their full name, such as "CATEL" for Cass Telephone Company or "NPTCO" North Penn Telephone Company. This allows people using the CID database to easily find and even become familiar with your Company ID.

Once NENA receives your form, your information is entered into the database, added to the NENA web site, and confirmation is sent to you. If changed or updates need to be made to an existing Company ID, just contact NENA and provide hard copy of your changes.

For more information or if you have questions about the NENA Company ID program, contact NENA Headquarters, (800) 332-3911.