



Office of the Director of  
**Telecommunications  
Regulation**

## **Premium Rate Numbering**

*Decision Notice D5/98*

**Document No. ODTR 98/54**

November 1998

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## **1. Introduction**

The Director of Telecommunications Regulation (“the Director”) is committed to facilitating the development of competition for liberalised telecommunications services, and to taking the necessary regulatory initiatives to ensure a transition to a fully liberalised market on 1 December 1998.

This document outlines the decision of the Director in relation to Numbering of Premium Rate services.

This is not a legal document. The Director may amend it from time to time. This document is without prejudice to the legal position, and to the rights and duties of the Director to regulate the market generally.

## **2. Premium Rate Service**

For the purpose of this document, Premium Rate services are those which give the caller access to information or other services. The charge to the caller for the call includes the cost of the call, and also a charge for access to the service. Directory information services are not covered by this document.

## **3. Background**

In September 1998, the Director issued document 98/39, which invited applications for non-geographic numbering allocations. The purpose of this document was to allow allocations of numbers to be made in advance of 1<sup>st</sup> December in order to allow new service providers to prepare to offer services from 1<sup>st</sup> December. This document invited applications for two Premium Rate numbering ranges, 1559 for adult type services, and 1550 for all other services. It was intended that services of varying tariff level would be provided using the 1550 numbering range.

An interim advisory group – the “Task Force on Numbering” has been established to advise the Director on certain numbering questions. The Task Force (TFN) has considered two questions in relation to Premium Rate services:

- to examine how to protect callers from excessive charging for Premium Rate Services
- to consider the implications and options for moving Premium Rate services to the ‘900’ number range

The TFN has concluded its consideration of these issues, and has provided recommendations to the ODTR.

Practical barriers have emerged in relation to applying multiple charging rates to the 1550 numbering range at this time, and on 30<sup>th</sup> October, the ODTR held a workshop to examine the problems, and to develop options for a solution.

Issues of legality, decency, honesty, etc. in relation to the content of Premium Rate services are currently investigated by REGTEL, the regulator of Premium Rate Services (32 Nassau Street, Dublin 2; e-mail [regtel@iol.ie](mailto:regtel@iol.ie))

#### **4. Charging Levels**

In a liberalised market, the charge made to callers of Premium Rate numbers may vary depending on the service providers involved, and the service being provided.

Taking into account:

- the recommendation of the TFN in relation to protecting consumers from unexpected charges for use of Premium Rate services
- the complexity of relationships which will exist between callers, telecommunications network operators, and premium rate service providers in a liberalised environment
- that in a competitive market, service providers will need to have freedom to set tariff levels

the Director has decided:

- it will be a licence requirement that the charging rate for calls to each Premium Rate service is clearly stated all promotional material,

and

- this requirement will be given effect through a set of “Numbering Conventions” which the ODTR will publish.

All telecommunications service providers to whom Premium Rate numbers are allocated by the ODTR are required to hold a General Telecommunications Licence (as defined in ODTR doc. 98/44). This licence requires conformity with the Numbering Conventions.

#### **5. Moving to a ‘900’ Flag**

The question of moving to a ‘900’ type numbering range for premium rate services was first raised in the consultation on telephone numbering which was carried out in 1998. Responses to the consultation showed support for the move, however many items of detail in relation to how or when this could be done were not addressed.

The ODTR has considered this issue further since then, and it has also been examined by the TFN. The following are the conclusions of this further consideration:

- It is not yet clear that there would be an overall benefit from a move to a 900 flag
- An immediate move to a ‘900’ number range would be difficult to implement, and any move will require a considerable transition period

- Moving Premium Rate to a '900' number range may require that numbers are recovered, causing disruption to existing services which currently use these numbers
- Further examination of the issue will be required, and no decision to move should be taken at this time.

Taking the above conclusions into account, the Director has decided

- For the immediate future, Premium Rate services will continue to be numbered from the 15XX range
- A further examination of the issues surrounding a move to the '900' flag will be undertaken in 1999, in consultation with interested parties.

## **6. Premium Rate Number Ranges**

Taking into account the recommendation of the TFN, and the discussions at the workshop on 30<sup>th</sup> October, the Director has decided that:

- All Premium Rate number ranges will be composed of a four-digit access code, followed by a six-digit subscriber number. Separate access codes will be used to differentiate service types, giving a total of 1 million numbers for each service type.
- The following access codes will be immediately available for allocation:

1520, 1530, 1540, 1550, 1559, 1560, 1570, 1580

- Adult type services will only be provided using the access code 1559
- Tariff rates associated with each code will increase incrementally, with 1520 and 1580 respectively at the lowest and the highest tariff rate currently available
- All Premium rate services will be provided using the access codes above. In the event that new services emerge which are clearly different from the services generally associated with the above codes, then the ODTR will consider opening new Premium Rate access codes. In this case, the ODTR will use access codes below 1520 for lower tariff services, and codes above 1580 for higher tariff services.
- Initially, allocations will only be made for subscriber numbers in the range 800 000 to 999 999, for all service providers.
- Subscriber numbers currently in use in the range 100 000 to 299 999 may continue in operation.

## **7. Applications**

Applications for allocation of Premium Rate numbers may be made in accordance with ODTR document 98/55.