

STATE OF NEW YORK

Public Service Commission

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<http://www.dps.state.ny.us>

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATELY

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PSC UNBLOCKS CALLER ID ON NYC 211 CALLS

— Action Seeks to Improve Safety, Lower Response Time —

Albany, NY — 5/21/08 — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today authorized that Caller ID information should be unblocked on all 211 dialed calls made to the New York City's 211 call center, and that the City should conduct a public education campaign to inform residents that Caller ID will be unblocked on such dialed calls.

“The safety and security of citizens is our paramount concern,” said Commission Chairman Garry Brown. “The Commission seeks to balance privacy concerns against the need to facilitate a rapid, efficient response in the event of an emergency. This decision provides greater access for those people who turn to city officials in times of need, while ensuring appropriate safeguards for callers.”

New York City recently implemented a program to utilize the 211 abbreviated dialing code to provide the public with an easy to use, easy to remember means of accessing community information and referral services. Callers located within the City will be able to dial 211 to be referred to organizations providing services such as health and welfare counseling, child care solutions, housing assistance, and hospice services. The 211 callers will be connected to call takers at the City's existing 311 call center, through which 211-type information and referral services will be available.

In its decision, the Commission ordered telephone companies that provide Caller ID blocking services to their customers to ‘unblock’ the transmission of the name and number information when one of their customers dials 211 to reach the City's call center. The

Commission's decision is based on the anticipation that some calls to 211 may be emergencies that will be transferred to 911. The City believes there is a need to ensure that when 211-dialed calls are transferred to 911, Caller ID information is needed to locate the caller.

The decision today is consistent with prior Commission rulings. Previously, critical public safety considerations were used to justify unblocking of Caller ID on 311-dialed calls. In fact, the large volume of 311-dialed calls that were determined to be emergencies that necessitated transfer to 911 demonstrates the public safety need for unblocking these calls. In 2006, 194,951 out of a total of 13.4 million calls to 311 had to be transferred to 911.

Although the Commission currently exercises no authority over wireless (cellular) carriers, they are strongly encouraged to participate in the program to ensure the safe delivery of their customers' 211-dialed calls.

The Commission will issue a written order reflecting today's action. That order, when available, may be obtained from the Commission's www.dps.state.ny.us Web site by accessing the Commission's File Room section of the homepage and referencing Case 07-C-1091. Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission orders may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500).