

Canadian MBI Administrator Report on Industry Usage of MBIs

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Report Background

MBI Blocks

Mobile Identification Number (MIN) Block Identifiers, known as MBIs, are numbering resources assigned to Wireless Carriers and used by Wireless Service Providers (WSPs). A MIN is a 10-digit number that is similar to a North American Numbering Plan (NANP) telephone number. The MIN consists of a 6-digit MIN Block Identifier (MBI), followed by a 4-digit Mobile Subscriber Number (MSN). One MBI contains 10,000 MINs. Individual MINs are administered by the Wireless Carrier to which the MBI is assigned (the MBI Assignee).

MBIs are administered by the Canadian MBI Administrator (CMA) as part of the Canadian Numbering Administrator (CNA) duties.

Current Industry Requirement for MBIs

The CMA is frequently asked why MBIs are still administered when the associated technology is no longer used. The CMA understood that the industry did not specifically know if the continued use of MBIs was required and when WSP representatives were casually asked, they often did not know if they were required or not in their own networks or for the industry in general. The CMA had received anecdotal information in the past that some WSPs may require MBIs for downstream or administrative systems associated with the management of their network, but the actual network usage was no longer required.

CSCN Direction to CMA

During CSCN 119, there was a discussion initiated by the CMA about the current industry requirement for MBIs. The CMA explained that it only had anecdotal responses by some carriers that MBIs either were or were not required by them.

The CMA recommended that the CSCN request the CMA to conduct a survey of the current MBI holders and the general industry about the required usage of MBIs.

MBI Survey

The CMA drafted the following survey questions for the current MBI holders and the industry in general and presented it to the members of CSCN 119:

1. Does your company have a technical or administrative requirement for MBI codes to be deployed/used within your networks?
2. If so, would those MBI codes technically or administratively be required by networks/companies external to your networks/companies?
3. If so, how?
4. If not, could a locally managed resource, unique to your networks/companies, meet your requirements for deployment from a technical/administrative perspective. (e.g., Could you make up your own unique MBI-type codes locally and employ them in your networks/administration systems?)

5. Can you foresee an issue with a locally managed MBI-type code regarding other companies? (e.g., subscribers; roaming; could a duplicate number used by a different company's subscriber affect things in your networks/systems, or vice-versa?)

The CMA then invited the members of the CSCN to participate in the survey and noted that the survey would be posted and emailed to the CSCN distribution list.

Survey Participation and Results

The CMA personally invited participation from those companies that were holding MBIs at the time. The CMA sought out the personnel either associated with the assignments of the MBIs for the company, or the best candidate to respond to the survey.

There were fewer than 10 respondents including the current MBI Code Holders.

MBI Code Holders

At the time of the survey, there were 6 distinct OCNs that were holding a total of 75,066 partial MBI blocks (the CMA tracks MBI assignments at the partial-block level). The 6 distinct OCNs essentially represented 4 telecommunications companies or group of companies. The CMA held phone conversations with representatives from each of the 4 companies and explained the background to the survey and why it was being conducted. All 4 companies talked with the CMA about their current usage of MBIs and offered to formally complete the survey form and return it to the CMA.

No Longer Required

Of the 4 MBI holders, 3 of the companies ultimately determined that they no longer required MBIs for any purpose. The CMA assisted them in returning the MBIs and eventually 30,399 partial MBI blocks were recovered and set to aging for the required 90-day period.

Continue to Require

The remaining 1 company represents 3 of the 6 distinct OCNs holding codes. This company explained to the CMA that the MBIs were still required to support downstream administrative systems for subscriber associations.

Non-MBI Code Holders

Based on the discussion and request made at CSCN 119 and the distributed survey form, the CMA received several survey responses from industry members representing companies that do not have MBIs. Most of the responses noted that they only provide wireline service and would be unaffected by anything related to MBIs. Any others noted that they were not the person who should be responding to the survey.

Summary

Based on the survey results and conversations with MBI Code Holders, it appears to the CMA that the MBIs are likely no longer required at a network level for wireless operation in Canada. It also appears that the MBI numbers have been built into downstream systems or processes by one entity and therefore they alone seem to require ongoing usage of the MBIs.

The CNA, as the CMA, will continue to administer MBIs according to the guideline and make assignments to valid applicants but the CSCN may find it prudent to examine sunsetting the use of MBIs by the Canadian industry if the only usage of an MBI is for subscriber associations in downstream systems by one entity. It may be that the single entity could administer their own subscriber serial numbers for this administrative system.