

Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau

Keeping Your Telephone Number When You Change Your Service Provider

FCC Consumer Facts

Background

Under the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) "local number portability" (LNP) rules, you can switch telephone service providers within the same geographic area and keep your existing phone number. However, if you are moving from one geographic area to another, you may not be able to take your number with you. In addition to switching from one wireless company to another, in most cases, you will be able to switch from a wireline company to a wireless company, or from a wireless company to a wireline company, and still keep your phone number.

Initiating the Process

If you want to change companies:

- **Do not** terminate your service with your existing company **before** initiating service with the prospective new company.
- Contact the prospective new company, which will start the process of porting your number by contacting your current company.
- Be aware that when terminating service with a wireless company, you may be obligated to pay any early **termination fees** under your existing contract. Also, when terminating service with any company, you are usually required to pay any outstanding balance owed. Review your bill or contract to determine what fees or charges apply.

Once you request service from the new company, however, your old company **may not refuse to port your number, even if you owe money** for an outstanding balance or termination fee.

- You may request service from a new company at any time.

Fees and Charges

Telephone companies are allowed to charge a fee to recover their number porting costs. Companies may or may not choose to charge a fee, and their fees may vary. If they do charge specific fees, the fees cannot exceed their porting costs. Local telephone companies that assess the fee generally charge a fixed monthly fee and may do so for up to five years.

Even if telephone companies decide to charge for porting, they may not refuse to port a number because a consumer has not paid a porting fee.

Additionally, some companies may choose to pay the old company's costs of porting for the benefit of their new customers. Ask your new company whether it has a policy of paying or reimbursing these charges.

The Adjustment Period

Your new telephone company can usually give you a good idea about how long the process will take. In general:

- For a **wireless-to-wireless** transfer, your phone number should work within a few hours of your request to change wireless providers.
- A **wireline-to-wireless** transfer may take several business days to complete. **Ask your new** wireless company whether you will be able to continue using your current wireline number during the transfer process.
- If you port from a **wireline phone to a wireless phone**, your wireline long distance company **will not** move with you. Your long distance service will generally be provided by your new wireless company, but you should verify this with the new wireless company before changing service providers. For wireline-to-wireless porting, there may be a period of "mixed service," when you essentially have two telephones with the same number during the adjustment period.

Note: Pursuant to a court-ordered stay, most small wireline companies currently are not required to port numbers to wireless companies until the FCC completes and publishes a study about the effect of the porting rules on small wireline companies. In addition, certain small wireline companies may have an exemption from the porting requirements if they have received a state waiver. Customers who want to port a wireline number to a wireless phone, and are told that they cannot, should contact their state public utility commission to find out whether their wireline carrier has been granted a waiver. A directory of state utility commissions can be found at <http://www.naruc.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=15>.

Emergency Services

In some areas, 911 operators automatically receive the phone number or location of a wireless call, but in many areas, that is not the case. Technology that will provide that information – Enhanced 911 or “E911” – is currently being implemented, but is not yet available using many wireless phones and in many parts of the country.

As noted above, during the porting process from the old company to the new company, there may be a period of “mixed service” - when you may have two telephones with the same number. During this time period, your E911 service may be affected. The call should go through, but the 911 operator may not be able to call you back if the call gets disconnected. For this reason, before porting either a wireless or a wireline number, **ask the new company** how long the porting process will take and how it will affect a call to 911 services.

Handsets and Special Services

In some instances, wireless **handsets** of different wireless telephone companies are incompatible. If you switch wireless companies, you may need to purchase a new handset, even if you retain the same phone number. If you have concerns about purchasing a new handset, **ask your new wireless company** whether or not your current handset will work with that company’s network.

Also, be aware that in a few areas, as consumers with ported numbers roam outside their normal wireless service areas, they may only be able to send and receive calls. Other services, such as caller ID, may not function properly.

For additional information on LNP, contact the FCC’s Consumer Center toll-free at: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice, 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY, or visit our Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb/NumberPortability/. This fact sheet may be updated to reflect future developments; we encourage you to check the web site for updates.

You can file a complaint by e-mail (fccinfo@fcc.gov); the Internet (www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html); telephone 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice, 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; fax 1-866-418-0232; or mail:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

Your complaint should include:

- name, address and telephone number where you can be reached during the business day;

- the telephone number involved with the complaint;
- as much specific information about the complaint as possible;
- a description of the steps you took to resolve the complaint;
- the names and telephone numbers of the company employees that you talked with in an effort to resolve the complaint, and the dates that you talked with these employees;
- copies of bills listing the disputed charges (circle the disputed charges on the copy of the bill); and
- the relief that you are requesting (such as adjustment of charges).

For More Information

For more information about telecommunications-related issues, you may contact the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau in the following ways:

Internet: www.fcc.gov/cgb

E-mail: fccinfo@fcc.gov

Consumer Center:
1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice
1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY

Fax: 1-866-418-0232

Mail:
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Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
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For this or any other consumer publication in an alternative format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio) please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/>.

This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceeding or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

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