

# Wireless Local Number Portability

## FCC Consumer Facts

### Background

For years, consumers with wireline phones have been able to switch from one local carrier to another in the same geographical area without having to change their phone number. Now, this service will be available to wireless phone customers as well.

Under the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) wireless "local number portability" (LNP) rules, you can switch wireless carriers and keep your existing phone number within the same local geographical area where it is currently assigned. In addition to switching from one wireless carrier to another, in some cases, you will be able to switch from a wireline carrier to a wireless carrier, or from a wireless carrier to a wireline carrier and still keep your phone number.\*

### Timeline for Wireless LNP

On **November 24, 2003**, wireless carriers in the **top 100 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs)** must implement this program. MSAs are geographic designations of population centers compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau (see attached map of the top 100 MSAs).

### Implementing Wireless LNP Outside the Top 100 MSAs

Outside of the top 100 MSAs, one of two guidelines applies, **whichever is later**:

- Wireless carriers must be capable of implementing wireless LNP **six months after receiving a request from the customer's prospective new carrier**;
- OR -
- Wireless carriers must be capable of implementing wireless LNP **six months after November 24, 2003**.

*Note:* When switching carriers you will be able to port your number **within the same metropolitan area**, but you may not be able to port it from one metropolitan area to another.

### Fees and Charges

- Carriers are allowed to charge a fee to departing customers to recover their legitimate costs, but cannot impose fees in excess of their "porting" costs.
- Different carriers may charge different amounts due to varying operating costs.
- Additionally, some carriers may choose to pay the old carrier's costs of porting for the benefit of their new customers. Ask your new carrier whether it has a policy of paying or reimbursing these charges.

### Initiating the Process

- If you want to change carriers contact the prospective **new** carrier, who will start the process of porting by contacting your current carrier.
- You may request service from a new carrier at any time.
- Do not terminate your service with **your existing carrier** before initiating service with the prospective new carrier.

Be aware that you are obligated to pay any early **termination fees** that you may have under your existing contract and any outstanding balance owed to your old carrier. Review your existing contract to determine

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what fees or charges apply. However, once you request service from the new carrier, your old carrier may not refuse to port your number, even if you owe money for an outstanding balance or termination fee.

### The Adjustment Period

Your new carrier 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 the wireless carrier you are switching to whether you will be able to continue using your current wireline number during the transfer process.

*\* Consumers interested in switching a number from a wireline to a wireless phone should check with a prospective new carrier to see if that is an option.*

- If you port from a **wireline phone to a wireless phone**, your wireline long distance carrier **will not** move with you. Your long distance service will generally be provided by your new wireless carrier, but you should verify this with the wireless carrier before changing service providers.

*Note:* For wireline-to-wireless porting, there may be a period of “mixed service” when you essentially have two telephones with the same number.

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### 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 most parts of the country.

As noted above, during the porting process from the old carrier to the new carrier, 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 service provider how long the porting process will take and how the porting process will affect a call to 911 services.

### Handsets and Special Services

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

Also, be aware that in a few areas, as you roam, consumers with ported numbers may only be able to send and receive calls; other services, such as caller ID, may not function properly.

For additional information on wireless 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.wireless.fcc.gov/](http://www.wireless.fcc.gov/).



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