

Wireless Local Number Portability Frequently Asked Questions

- What is wireless number portability (WLNP)?
 - WLNP is a wireless consumer's ability to change service providers within the same local area and still keep the same phone number.
 - WLNP will allow consumers to switch from one wireless carrier to another within the same general metropolitan area. It does not allow consumers to keep the same phone number when moving to a new town or city.
 - WLNP also allows consumers to move a phone number from a wireline phone to a wireless phone in some cases.
- When will WLNP be available?
 - FCC rules require wireless carriers to make WLNP available to their customers according to the following schedule :
 - Wireless carriers in the top 100 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) must implement WLNP starting on November 24, 2003. (MSAs are geographic designations of population centers compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau.) A list of the 100 largest MSAs can be found at <http://wireless.fcc.gov/wlnp>.
 - Wireless carriers outside the top 100 MSAs that receive a request to port a numbers must be capable of doing so within six months after receiving the request or by May 24, 2004, whichever is later.
- Once porting becomes available, who should consumers contact if they want to port their number to a new carrier?
 - Consumers should contact their prospective new carrier, who will start the porting process. The new carrier will first confirm the consumer's identity and then make a porting request of the old carrier. When consumers go to their new carrier to port a number, they should bring along a recent wireless bill, which will have their correct name and address as it appears in the carriers' databases. This should aid in making the porting process go smoothly. Once a valid porting request has been made, the old carrier cannot refuse to port a number.
- Are carriers allowed to charge for number porting, and, if so, how much can be charges be?

- Carriers are allowed to recover their costs of implementing WLNP by charging fees to customers. They have been allowed to do this in advance of the LNP deadline because they have been incurring costs for LNP upgrades in preparation for the deadline.
- For the past several months, many carriers have been including line-item fees for LNP on their customers' monthly bills, ranging from a few cents to a little over a dollar.
- Carriers are also allowed to charge a fee to customers at the time their number is ported. However, there are no rules preventing a new carrier from paying an old carrier's porting costs for the benefit of the new customer. You should ask the new carrier whether it has a policy of paying or reimbursing such charges.
- Can different carriers charge different amounts?
 - Yes, because different carriers have varying costs of operating due to numerous economic factors. Although the FCC does not regulate the amount of such charges, all such charges must be just and reasonable.
- If a consumer has a long-term contract with a carrier, is that consumer still obligated to pay an early termination fee even if he/she ports the phone number to a new carrier?
 - Yes. While consumers who wish to switch carriers may request service from and port numbers to a new carrier at any time, they are still obligated to pay any early termination fees they may have under an existing contract, and they are obligated to pay any outstanding balance owed to the old carrier.
 - Consumers interested in switching providers should review their existing contract to determine what fees or charges would apply.
 - However, once a consumer has requested service from a new carrier, the old carrier may not delay or refuse to port a number even that individual owes money for an outstanding balance or termination fee.
- Can consumers port a wireline number to a wireless phone?
 - Wireline to wireless porting will be possible in some cases. Consumers interested in porting a number from a wireline to a wireless phone should check with the prospective new wireless carrier to see if wireline to wireless porting is an option for them.

- If you port a number from a wireline phone to a wireless phone, your wireline long distance carrier will not move with you. Your long distance carrier will generally be provided by your new wireless carrier.
- How long will the porting process take?
 - For a wireless to wireless transfer, the porting process should take approximately two and a half hours from the time the porting request is made of the old carrier. The FCC has not mandated a specific time frame for the porting process. Two and a half hours is the time frame agreed upon by the wireless industry, and the FCC supports and encourages carriers to use that time frame.
 - A wireline to wireless port will probably take longer to complete, and could take several days. Before porting between wireline and wireless phones, consumers should ask their new service provider how long the process will take.
- If consumers port a number to a new wireless carrier, can they still use their current phone?
 - For various reasons, wireless handsets are often incompatible among different wireless service providers. Consumers will likely need to purchase a new phone, even when they retain the same phone number.
- Will porting my number cause any problems with E911?
 - During the time the number is being ported from the old carrier to the new carrier, there may be a period of “mixed service” when E911 service is affected. If customers call 911 during this period, the call should go through. However, the 911 operator may not be able to call consumers back if the call gets disconnected.
 - Before porting either a wireless or a wireline number, consumers should ask their new service provider how long the porting process will take and how the porting process will affect emergency services.
- When consumers living in the top 100 MSAs port a number, will their phones work when they are roaming in the areas outside the top 100 MSAs?
 - Yes. In areas where WLNP is not required until approximately six months after November 24, phones with ported numbers should work as they normally do.