CNS /Update Newsletter Feature

What You Need to Know about Wireless-Number Portability

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What You Need to Know about Wireless-Number Portability

Beginning Nov. 24, 2003, wireless-number portability became available in the 100 largest metropolitan areas nationwide. This simply means keeping your cellphone number when choosing a new carrier.

Many current "protections" accorded the "owners" of telephone number ranges will assuredly be inherent in the cellular-phone portability rules. The current portability implementation is related to, and a continuation of, the overall issue of number portability addressed by the FCC in 1996 concerning wireline-to-wireline portability and its implementation. Subsequent Orders and Reports by the FCC have continued to develop these rules.

Local portability of wireline numbers has been in effect for approximately three years.

As mentioned above, the lateness of the decision to include wireline-to-wireless porting may exacerbate start-up issues. Confusion may stem from misunderstandings of basic portability aspects. Here is an overview of what you need to know:

• **All Portability is Local.** "Local" portability means that you can only port to a new carrier that serves your current carrier's location. In other words, you can't port your number to a new carrier in a city hundreds of miles away.

• **Is Your Town In the Top 100?** Wireless number portability is only available in the 100 largest US metro areas as of November 24. Some carriers may offer portability in smaller markets in the spring of 2004. If you live in a smaller town (like Gainesville), you will not be able to port your wireless number until next year. Florida cities in the Top 100 list include: Tampa-St. Petersburg, Miami-Ft. Lauderdale, Orlando, West Palm-Boca Raton, Jacksonville and Sarasota-Bradenton.

• **Prevent a False Start.** Don't start by canceling service with your current provider; you might lose your number. Start with the carrier to which you want to switch. Your new carrier will then contact your current provider to transfer your phone number.

• **Know Your Current Contract.** Review your agreement. You may be subject to a termination fee if you cancel your existing service early.

• **Details, Details, Details.** Your new carrier will need to know specific information about your existing account. For convenience, bring your most recent monthly bill when you go to transfer your phone number. If you don't have a copy of the bill, be sure you bring the exact details of your account such as your name as it appears on the bill, your billing address, account number and current telephone number. If anything is misspelled on your application, your transfer could be delayed. You may need a new phone when you switch.

• **Plan for Process.** Schedule plenty of time to fill out the application forms, choose your new phone and rate plan, and possibly wait while other customers do the same. Millions of customers are expected to port their phone numbers in the first few days it's available. There may be long lines at some stores, and porting during the first few days may take a few hours or even days.
What You Need to Know about Wireless-Number Portability

- *Your Signature Is Required.* Your authorization is required to move your wireless number from your existing carrier to a new provider. Make sure the person signing the authorization is the same person who signed up for the original service. This protects you from having your number switched without your permission.

You can learn more about this topic by visiting the FCC Web site:
http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/NumberPortability/
[http://www.it.ufl.edu/training/peer2peer].

Your Comments are Welcome

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and all UFIT documentation. Please send your comments to:

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