

Number Portability – Taking Your Number With You

Number portability is the ability to keep your same telephone number when you change providers. For example, if you had the phone number 555-434-2457 with your AT&T landline, you can change to Charter and keep the 555-434-2457 number. Note that this only works if you change providers – not locations.

If You Experience Problems when “Porting” Numbers

Generally, number portability occurs seamlessly and invisibly when you change telecommunications providers. However, the process does require your old and new providers to make a number of simultaneous network changes to keep your calls flowing, and in very rare occasions this can go awry. Contact your new providers, but if that is not effective, please contact the Commission. The Commission has experience mediating these issues.

Geographic Number Portability

To date, the network does not have the ability to port landline numbers outside the geographic area to which they were originally assigned. This is because telephone numbers are, in effect, maps, with the first three numbers (the area code) defining a portion of a specific state, and the next three numbers (called the NNX) defining a neighborhood. Breaking that geographical linkage is technically feasible, but would impose considerable costs on both providers and customers. Both the Commission and federal authorities are working on evolving the network to make geographic number portability possible, but that capability is still several years off.

If you have questions or problems involving number portability, please contact Peter Jahn at 608-267-2338, or via email at peter.jahn@wisconsin.gov.