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FCC Number Porting Rules: What US Businesses Get

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The short answer

As of October 2026, the federal number porting rules give a US business four practical guarantees:

1. **You can keep your number when you change providers in the same area.** The rules cover landline carriers, wireless carriers and interconnected VoIP providers (47 CFR 52.21(m), 47 CFR 52.34).
2. **A "simple" port must be completed within one business day**, and a non-simple port within four business days, once the old provider has an accurate and complete request (47 CFR 52.35).
3. **The old provider cannot refuse because you owe it money.** The FCC says your old company "cannot refuse to port your number, even if you owe money for an outstanding balance or termination fee" (FCC consumer guide). You still owe the money.
4. **For a simple port, the old provider may ask only for a fixed list of data**, and a passcode only if you set one up (47 CFR 52.36).

What the rules do not give you: a cap on porting fees, "simple" status for a multi-line account, the one-day clock for toll-free numbers, or the right to take a local number to another city.

This is educational information, not legal advice.

Who the rules cover

The FCC's rules define number portability as "the ability of users of telecommunications services to retain, at the same location, existing telecommunications numbers without impairment of quality, reliability, or convenience when switching from one telecommunications carrier to another" (47 CFR 52.21(m)).

Three groups of providers are covered:

- **Landline (wireline) carriers**, under the long-standing rules in 47 CFR Part 52, Subpart C (47 CFR 52.23).
- **Wireless carriers**, which must port to and from landline carriers. A landline carrier must port a number to a wireless carrier whose coverage area overlaps where the number is provisioned, as long as the number keeps its original rate center (47 CFR 52.23(h)).
- **Interconnected VoIP providers.** The FCC extended porting obligations to them in its 2007 VoIP LNP Order (FCC 07-188, 22 FCC Rcd 19531), published at 73 FR 9463 on 21 February 2008 and effective 24 March 2008 (Federal Register). The resulting rule says a VoIP provider must "take all steps necessary to initiate or allow a port-in or port-out ... without unreasonable delay or unreasonable procedures," and may not sign any agreement that prohibits a customer from porting (47 CFR 52.34).

On 22 September 2025, the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau reminded VoIP providers of this duty, whether they get numbers directly or through a "numbering partner," and said the numbering partner must also facilitate the port (DA 25-878).

The one-business-day rule, read closely

The core rule is 47 CFR 52.35(a). Carriers required to port "must complete a simple wireline-to-wireline or simple intermodal port request within one business day unless a longer period is requested by the new provider or by the customer."

It was adopted in the FCC's 2009 Porting Interval Order (FCC 09-41, WC Docket No. 07-244, adopted 13 May 2009), which cut the interval for simple ports from four business days to one (FCC 09-41). A follow-up order set the deadline: 2 August 2010 for most providers and 2 February 2011 for small providers (FCC 10-85; 47 CFR 52.35(b)).

The details in the rule decide when the clock actually starts:

- **Business days are Monday to Friday**, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. minimum business hours, "excluding the current service provider's company-defined holidays."
- **The 1 p.m. cut-off.** An accurate and complete Local Service Request (LSR) received by the old provider between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. local time is eligible for activation at midnight the same day. A simple port request received after that is treated as received at 8 a.m. the next business day.
- **"Local time"** means the main time zone of the number portability region the number belongs to, not your office's time zone (47 CFR 52.35(e)(1)).
- **"Intermodal" includes any port involving interconnected VoIP**, as well as landline-to-wireless and wireless-to-landline ports (47 CFR 52.35(e)(2)).
- **Waivers.** A carrier that has an FCC waiver of the one-day rule must still finish a simple port within four business days (47 CFR 52.35(c)).

The clock starts when the old provider receives a *complete and accurate* request. Days spent preparing the order, or lost to a rejected request, do not count, which is why a port can take two weeks without breaking the one-day rule. Our article on how long number porting takes covers the gap between the rule and real timelines.

Wireless-to-wireless ports are not covered by 52.35. The FCC said in 2010 that "the one-business day porting interval for simple ports does not apply to transfers between two wireless providers"; the industry instead uses a voluntary two-and-a-half-hour standard (FCC 10-85, footnote 3; FCC 09-41).

Simple or non-simple: why many business ports are not simple

The one-day rule applies only to *simple* ports. The FCC has defined simple ports as those that:

1. do not involve unbundled network elements;
2. involve an account only for a single line;
3. do not include complex switch translations (for example Centrex, ISDN, AIN services, remote call forwarding, or multiple services on the loop); and
4. do not include a reseller.

(FCC 09-41, footnote 11; repeated in FCC 10-85, footnote 3.)

Many small business accounts fail at least one test: a main number plus a fax line is not a single-line account, and ISDN, Centrex or reseller lines are excluded.

Non-simple does not mean unprotected. The rule says carriers "must complete a non-simple wireline-to-wireline or non-simple intermodal port request within four business days unless a longer period is requested by the new provider or by the customer" (47 CFR 52.35(d)). The same caveat applies: the four days run from a complete and accurate request, not from the day you sign up.

Can your old provider refuse or stall?

Not for the reasons providers sometimes give. The FCC consumer guide, last updated or reviewed on 10 December 2025, says that once you request service from a new company, "your old company cannot refuse to port your number, even if you owe money for an outstanding balance or termination fee" (FCC). The same guide tells you to review your contract, because early termination fees and balances are still yours to pay.

For VoIP, the rule is explicit: the provider must act "without unreasonable delay or unreasonable procedures that have the effect of delaying or denying porting," and telecommunications carriers have the same duty when the port goes to or from a VoIP provider (47 CFR 52.34(a), (c)).

What the old provider *can* do is reject a request whose details do not match its records. That is a failed validation, not a refusal, and the clock restarts with the corrected request.

What the old provider may ask for

In its 2007 VoIP LNP Order, the FCC concluded that validating a simple port should rely on no more than four information fields: the 10-digit telephone number, the customer account number, the 5-digit ZIP code, and a passcode if applicable (FCC 09-41, footnote 32, describing FCC 07-188).

In 2010 the FCC standardized the full order form at 14 fields, adopting a recommendation of the North American Numbering Council (FCC 10-85). The rule now says a carrier "may require only" these fields for a simple port (47 CFR 52.36). Most are carrier-to-carrier codes. The ones you supply are:

Field	Where you get it
Ported telephone number	Your bill
Account number	Your bill or online account (may differ from the phone number)
ZIP code	The service address on the account
Desired due date	You and the new provider choose it
Passcode	Only if you asked for one and it was assigned; otherwise optional (52.36(c))

This limit applies to simple ports only. Section 52.36 does not restrict what a carrier may ask for on a non-simple port, so expect more questions, such as the exact service address on the account.

Fees: what the rules say and what they do not

There is no federal porting fee cap that we could find. The FCC's own guide says only that "companies may charge you to port your number, but you can ask whether any fees can be waived or negotiated" (FCC).

The cost recovery rule lets carriers other than incumbent local carriers "recover their number portability costs in any manner consistent with applicable state and federal laws and regulations" (47 CFR 52.33(b)). That is not a cap. Ask for any porting fee in writing before you order.

Toll-free numbers follow a different track

Toll-free numbers are portable, but they are not handled like local numbers. They sit under 47 CFR Part 52, Subpart D, where the toll-free subscriber chooses a Responsible Organization (RespOrg) to manage its number records in the toll-free database (47 CFR 52.101).

Moving a toll-free number means changing its RespOrg. Somos, which runs the toll-free number registry, says use of its Resp Org Change (ROC) system is mandated by the Somos tariff and that requests requiring a letter of agency "must be addressed within 2 business days" (Somos, 5 December 2019). The current Somos tariff says the same: Help Desk Resp Org changes "will be performed within two business days from the receipt of the request" (Somos TFNRegistry Functions Tariff, section 3.6.2). The one-business-day interval in 52.35 is written for local ports processed by Local Service Request, so do not assume it applies to a toll-free move. More on how toll-free numbers work: toll-free numbers.

Wireless ports and the port-out fraud rules

On 15 November 2023, the FCC adopted rules against SIM swap and port-out fraud (FCC 23-95, WC Docket No. 21-341) (FCC 23-95). They require wireless carriers to authenticate a customer with secure methods before a port-out, to notify customers of port-out requests, and to offer account locks (Federal Register, 8

December 2023).

Three points for a business:

- **They apply only to wireless (CMRS) providers** (47 CFR 52.37(a)). A landline, VoIP or toll-free number gets none of them.
- **Compliance is still pending.** The notification and lock provisions were "delayed indefinitely" until the FCC publishes a compliance date (Federal Register). On 5 July 2024 the Wireline Competition Bureau also waived the authentication and training rules until the other rules take effect (DA 24-649). The eCFR, current to 27 October 2026, still says compliance "will not be required" until a date is set (47 CFR 52.37(h)). No date had been announced as of 28 October 2026; the FCC's 2026 agenda lists the next step as "Undetermined" (91 FR 53092).
- **Carriers add friction anyway.** Many carriers offer port-out PINs and account locks on their own. A lock left switched on will block a legitimate port too.

Our research note on port-out fraud and SIM swaps covers what to switch on today.

Where the rules do not help

- **Moving to a new area.** Portability is defined "at the same location." The FCC says that if you move to a new geographic area, you may not be able to keep your number when changing providers (47 CFR 52.21(m); FCC).
- **Some rural carriers.** Some rural wireline providers have state waivers from the porting requirement; the FCC tells affected customers to contact their state public utilities commission (FCC).
- **Cancelled numbers.** Porting moves a working number. If you cancel the old service first, there may be nothing left to port. The FCC's first instruction is: "Do not terminate your service with your existing company before initiating new service with another company" (FCC).

What you are entitled to, and what is not guaranteed

You are entitled to	Rule or source	Not guaranteed
Keep your number when switching providers in the same area	47 CFR 52.21(m), 52.34	Keeping a local number after moving to a different area
Simple landline or intermodal port completed within one business day of a complete request	47 CFR 52.35(a)	A one-day port for a multi-line, Centrex/ISDN or reseller account
Non-simple port completed within four business days of a complete request	47 CFR 52.35(d)	Any deadline counted from the day you sign up with the new provider
No refusal because of an unpaid balance or termination fee	FCC consumer guide	Forgiveness of that balance or fee
Simple port validated only on the standard fields; passcode only if assigned	47 CFR 52.36	A port that goes through when the account number, ZIP or PIN does not match

You are entitled to	Rule or source	Not guaranteed
VoIP providers must facilitate ports without unreasonable delay	47 CFR 52.34	The same one-day clock for wireless-to-wireless or toll-free moves
Ask the FCC for help through an informal complaint	FCC Consumer Complaint Center	A cap on porting fees

Step by step: porting a US business number

1. **Keep the old service active.** Do not cancel anything until the new provider confirms the number has moved.
2. **Get a copy of the current bill or account record.** Note the exact account holder name, the service address, the account number and every number on the account.
3. **Ask the old provider for a port-out PIN or passcode** if it uses one, and ask whether any account lock or number freeze is switched on. Remove it before ordering.
4. **Decide which numbers move.** If you move only some numbers from a multi-line account, ask the old provider which number will remain as the billing number for what stays.
5. **Ask both providers about fees** and get any porting or termination fee in writing.
6. **Submit the order and sign the letter of authorization** with the new provider, using the name and address exactly as the old provider has them.
7. **Pick a due date with margin.** You or the new provider may request a later date than the minimum interval (47 CFR 52.35(a)).
8. **Watch for rejections.** If the order is rejected, get the exact reason, fix that field and resubmit the same day.
9. **Test on the due date** from a mobile on another network.
10. **Cancel the old service last,** and only for what has actually moved.

When a port stalls: escalation and where to complain

Keep a dated log of the order, each rejection and its reason, and each corrected request. If more than one business day (simple) or four (non-simple) pass after a complete request, you have a concrete rule to point to.

Escalate in this order:

1. **The new provider's porting team.** It deals with the old provider carrier-to-carrier and can see the rejection codes. Ask it to escalate.
2. **The old provider's retention or porting department,** in writing. A short script: "My name is [Name], authorized contact on account [number]. On [date], [new provider] submitted a port request for [numbers]. Please confirm whether it has been rejected, the exact reason, and the date it will be completed. Under 47 CFR 52.35 and 52.34, a complete port request must be completed without unreasonable delay."

3. **An informal complaint to the FCC** through the FCC Consumer Complaint Center, which the FCC's porting guide links for issues the guide does not resolve. Include your log, account details and both providers' names.
4. **Your state public utilities commission,** particularly if a rural carrier says it holds a porting waiver (FCC).

FAQ

Does the one-business-day rule apply to toll-free numbers? Not as written. Section 52.35 governs local wireline and intermodal ports. Toll-free numbers move by a RespOrg change under Part 52, Subpart D and the Somos process (47 CFR 52.101; Somos).

We have ten numbers on one account. Is that a simple port? No. A simple port involves "an account only for a single line" (FCC 09-41). The four-business-day rule for non-simple ports applies instead (47 CFR 52.35(d)).

Can my provider hold my number until I pay my final bill? According to the FCC, no, though you still owe the balance or any termination fee (FCC).

Do the 2023 port-out fraud rules protect my office VoIP number? No. They apply only to wireless providers, and as of October 2026 compliance is still not required (47 CFR 52.37). Use a strong portal password and a port-out PIN if offered.

Auto Attendant's port-in flow checks portability first, collects the letter of authorization online, and charges $0 until the number has moved. Details are on the port your number page.

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17. Somos, ROC system for toll-free port changes (5 December 2019): https://somos.com/insights/utilizing-roc-system-toll-free-number-port-changes (RespOrg change process).
18. FCC Consumer Complaint Center: https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov/hc/en-us (informal complaints).
19. FCC Unified Agenda 2026, 91 FR 53092 : https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/08/14/2026-16615/unified-agenda-of-federal-regulatory-and-deregulatory-actions-2026 (RIN 3060-AL34).

Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

1. https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/section-52.21
2. https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/section-52.34
3. https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/section-52.35
4. https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/porting-keeping-your-phone-number-when-you-change-providers
5. https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/section-52.36
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9. https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-09-41A1.pdf
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About Auto Attendant

Auto Attendant gives a small business one phone number and a recorded menu that sends each caller to the right person. The call rings the mobile that person already carries, using their normal dialler and their normal mobile plan. Pricing is a single flat monthly fee for the whole company rather than a charge for each user, and there is no app, desk phone or hardware to install.

One number, one menu, the phones you already own

A caller dials the business number, hears a short greeting and chooses an option. Each option can ring one mobile, ring several at once so whoever is free answers first, or try people one after another in a set order. There is no limit on how many people sit on the receiving end, because nobody is billed per seat. Setup is done by the owner in a few minutes: pick a number, write the greeting, and point each option at a mobile.

What it deliberately is not

An auto attendant routes a call; it does not answer one. Nobody at Auto Attendant speaks to callers, and no AI stands in for a receptionist. A business that wants its calls handled, messages taken and appointments booked wants an answering service, which is a different product at a different price. A business that needs call recording, queues, agent dashboards or CRM integration wants a contact centre platform. Auto Attendant is for the case where the call should simply reach the right pocket.

Keeping personal numbers off the internet

The business number is the only number a caller ever sees. Personal mobile numbers are never displayed and never given out, which is what lets an owner put a number on a website, an invoice, a van or a Google Business Profile without handing a personal line to everyone who finds it. An existing advertised number can be ported across and kept, and the old line keeps working while the port is in progress.

Work with Auto Attendant

Visit Auto Attendant to see how it works, how it compares to a personal mobile, Google Voice and a full phone platform, and the current pricing.

Telephone number portability, emergency calling and caller-ID rules differ by country and change over time. Articles published here describe general practice and cite primary regulator and carrier sources; they are not a guarantee of any timeline, and they are not legal or regulatory advice for a specific business.

Website: https://autoattendant.io

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