

FCC: Landline number move should take 1 day, not 4

May 13 2009, By PETER SVENSSON , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- The Federal Communications Commission voted Wednesday to force landline phone companies to act faster when their subscribers want to move their phone number to a rival service.

The commission will require companies to transfer, or "port," landline phone numbers within one business day, down from the current four-day requirement.

Wireless numbers are currently ported within one day - in many cases within hours - and the commission said landline companies should be just as fast.

Landline numbers can be transferred to competing landline services, such as those from cable or Internet calling companies, or to cell phones.

The shortened porting period should take effect in about a year.

The FCC told the North American Numbering Council, which coordinates number issues for the carriers, to develop new procedures within about three months. The carriers will then have nine months to comply. Smaller carriers will get an extra six months, for a total of about a year and a half.

Stifel Nicolaus analyst Blair Levin said the order is likely to benefit [wireless carriers](#) and [cable companies](#), while imposing new costs on smaller, rural [phone](#) companies like Little Rock, Ark.-based Windstream

Corp. and Monroe, La.-based CenturyTel Inc. Such companies have fewer customers over which to spread costs.

Acting FCC Chairman Michael Copps said the commission has been encouraging the industry for years to shorten its porting intervals, and that the time had come to force action.

Republican Commissioner Robert McDowell joined the two Democratic commissioners for a unanimous vote. The commission has two empty seats.

The FCC also voted to required Internet calling companies to notify their customers and the commission before shutting down. Some companies have abruptly departed from the business, most notably Sunrocket, which stranded 200,000 subscribers in 2007.

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