

Part 52: Numbering

The Commission added Part 52 in 1996 to address telephone numbering administration and Local Number Portability (LNP). Telephone numbering administration refers to the allocation of numbers in an equitable fashion to different types of telecommunications providers. LNP allows a customer to change local telephone service providers without having to change telephone numbers, provided the customer remains at the same location.

In 1995, the Commission created the North American Number Council (NANC) to make recommendations to the FCC on numbering issues and oversee the North American Numbering Plan (NANP) process. The Commission also created an impartial entity, the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA) to be responsible for administering and assigning telecommunications numbering resources in an efficient and non-discriminatory manner. The Commission gave NANPA the specific responsibility of allocating NPA codes (commonly referred to as “area codes”) and NXX (“exchange”) codes.

Local Number Portability

The 1996 Act mandated that all incumbent and competitive LECs provide numbering portability, to the extent that it is “technically feasible.” The Commission later required all cellular, broadband PCS, and CMRS providers to provide number portability, including intermodal (wireline to wireless) portability. Small carriers are required to provide wireline-to-wireless intermodal porting where the requesting wireless carrier's coverage area overlaps the geographic location in which the customer's wireline number is provisioned, provided the porting-in carrier maintains the number's original rate center designation following the port. A LEC with fewer than 2% of the nation's subscriber lines in the aggregate may petition its state commission for suspension or modification of LNP requirements under Section 251(f)(2) of the Act.

In May 2010, the FCC released an Order requiring the porting of customer phone numbers to a new provider within one business day.

A 2007 Order expanded LNP obligations to VoIP providers and the carriers that provide numbers to them, effective March 24, 2008. In June 2015, however, the Commission issued an Order establishing a process to authorize interconnected VoIP providers to obtain NANP telephone numbers directly from the Numbering Administrators, rather than through intermediaries, such as CLECs, as they had previously been doing.

Part 52 also addresses toll-free numbers.