

CSDVRS Meetings at FCC: Video Equipment and Portability – A Pragmatic Approach
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Current Law:

The FCC's numbering orders support both number and equipment portability.

Numbering portability: Allows VRS consumers to keep their telephone number even when they switch providers. CSDVRS supports numbering portability as a functionally equivalent solution that eliminates the need for businesses and consumers to communicate new numbers to friends, colleagues and family every time that they switch providers.

Equipment portability: Allows VRS consumers to continue using the customer premises equipment ("CPE") given out by one provider when these users switch to one or more different providers. New default providers must update the central database in support of the CPE, while original phone distributors must continue providing basic calling features on those devices. The December numbering order establishes that providers need not support enhanced features on devices they have distributed when consumers port to a new default provider.

Industry porting standard: Sorenson has proposed a proprietary interface that would allow a new provider to update the database even when a consumer ports his or her number to another default provider, but still maintains a Sorenson CPE. No interface that is non-proprietary has been presented to and accepted by the VRS marketplace.

Problem: Equipment portability for VRS is not commercially practical given the state of video technology and the distribution of CPE currently on the market. This is because the vast majority of VRS consumers have Sorenson VPs. If a consumer with a VP selects a VRS provider other than Sorenson as his or her default provider and attempts to use the same VP with that new provider, the consumer will lose features on the Sorenson CPE that had made that device *functionally equivalent* to a hearing person's phone, such as the device's address book, last numbers called, frequently called numbers, and missed calls. After realizing that choosing another default provider will cause the loss of all the features of the CPE that the consumer likes, the consumer will likely switch back to Sorenson to reestablish the desired features.

Analogy to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and wireless phones: Equipment portability is not functionally equivalent to other telephone services that use multiple networks, such as VoIP or wireless services. For example, there is no FCC requirement for all wireless phones to work with all wireless carriers - an AT&T iPhone will not work on the Verizon network. While it may be technically possible to port between carriers, no provider does this for ALL cell phone products because there are a myriad of cell phones on the market and there are high costs associated with supporting another company's infrastructure. Similarly, in the VoIP market,

CPE that is provided by Vonage will not support a customer using Packet8. The reasons for this are varied but include security, enhanced service capabilities and the need to ensure that service is reliable and meets the needs of their customers. The same holds true in the VRS market.

An impractical and ineffective rule: The FCC's order requires each provider to (1) support porting of its own video phones so that these provide an open means to update the database; and (2) support as many as twelve different videophones distributed by twelve different providers. To achieve this, VRS providers (and in turn the TRS Interstate Fund) must incur significant expenses for engineering and equipment infrastructure changes for a result that will be unacceptable to the consumer: an inferior videophone that will repeatedly point consumers back to the provider that gave out their equipment, which, in at least 90% of all cases, will be Sorenson. Only with that provider will the consumer be able to enjoy *all* of the features – both basic and enhanced – that came with the videophone.

Proposed Solution:

Eliminate requirement for CPE to operate on another VRS provider's network when the user ports his or her number to a new default provider. Practical implications:

1. The VRS market will function in a similar manner to the cell phone market. A user will be able to port a number to a new VRS provider, who may or may not allow the porting of the CPE based the commercial arrangements with the manufacturer of the CPE.
2. Consumers will continue to be able to keep and port their numbers from provider to provider and from device to device.
3. Consumers will continue to have interoperability because they will continue to be able to dial around their default provider. Thus, they can keep their 10-digit numbers, their video equipment (with all its enhanced features), and access any provider of choice. When consumers dial around, CPNI rules can protect their consumer calling information.
4. If consumers wish to break all ties with the provider who supplied them with their video device, they may do so by porting their number over to a new VRS provider and obtaining new CPE from that provider.
5. The TRS Interstate Fund will experience significant cost savings because VRS providers will not be forced to support ported devices for every single other VRS provider.
6. VRS providers will have market incentives to continue developing and enhancing new CPE to meet user needs.

This proposal will support an open interoperable environment that will (1) guarantee consumers freedom of choice; (2) promote market incentives for competition and technological innovation that can achieve greater functional equivalency in VRS; (3) cut down on Fund expenditures; and (4) eliminate commercially impractical solutions that will not be effective for the user community.