

# Consumer Corner

## Wireless Local Number Portability: What You Should Know

(NAPSA)—A checklist for cell phone customers who are considering changing wireless carriers and taking their numbers with them has been created by Cingular Wireless to help consumers wade through what may be a complicated process.

The Federal Communications Commission has ruled that as of Nov. 24, the nation's 146 million cell phone users will be able to keep their phone numbers if they change carriers. The "number portability" service will first be available only in the country's 100 largest metropolitan areas but will be available throughout the country by May 24, 2004.

"Local number portability can be a bit more complicated than it sounds unless you are aware of the details," said Adam Vital, Vice President of Wireless Operations and Support at Cingular Wireless. "And that's the reason for our checklist. We want consumers to be knowledgeable about the process if they want to change wireless carriers and keep their number."

The Cingular Checklist is also available at Cingular retail locations as well as online at [www.cingular.com](http://www.cingular.com).

• **Know the details.** Your new carrier will need to know information about your existing account. So for convenience, bring a bill from your existing carrier to your new one. If you don't have a copy of your bill, know the exact details of your account, including name (for example, is it billed to "Bill" or "William" Smith), address, account number and phone number.

• **Leave some time.** The process can take a few minutes or a few hours. It could take even longer for your phone to be fully functional (such as being able to receive incoming calls).

• **Timing counts.** Start the process with your new carrier—they will cancel your current service for you. If you start by can-



**Cell phone users should "check" out details if they are considering switching carriers.**

celling your service with your existing carrier, you may lose your number.

• **Are you a free agent?** You may be under contract with your existing carrier, who may charge you an early termination fee if you are still under contract.

• **Start from scratch.** You may need a new phone when you switch carriers, even if you are keeping your number. Familiarize yourself with your new carrier's rate plans, coverage area and features, too, because you'll need to choose a new plan.

• **Larger cities first.** WLNP is required to be available in the 100 largest metro areas on November 24th of this year. Some carriers may offer it in smaller markets before late May 2004.

• **The "L" in WLNP.** "Local" means when switching carriers you will be able to take your number within the same metro area but you may not be able to take it from one metro area to another.

• **Need your consent.** Your new wireless carrier will need your authorization to move your wireless number from your old carrier. This protects you from carriers switching your number without your permission.