

Releasing COM Ports in Windows Operating Systems Power Line Modem with a USB Interface

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Overview Windows operating systems will assign COM ports to devices that have been attached to the computer. This most commonly happens with “virtual COM port drivers” that are actually USB products, but “look” like COM ports to the computer. Power Line Modems with USB ports work like this.

When the PLM is first connected to the computer, the operating system automatically assigns a COM port number. This COM port number might be high, such as COM 11. A problem can arise if the software only allows a limited range of COM ports, for example, COM 1 through 8. Additionally, each PLM USB product contains a unique serial number burned into the USB interface chip by the IC manufacturer. If different PLM USB interfaces are connected to a computer, each one attached will cause a new COM port to be reserved by Windows.

Solution It is possible to release Windows-reserved COM ports from previously released hardware that is no longer in use.

1. Click **Start**, point to **All Programs**, point to **Accessories**, and then click **Command Prompt**.
2. At a command prompt, type the following command and then press ENTER:
set devmgr_show_nonpresent_devices=1
3. Type the following command at command prompt, and then press **ENTER**:
start devmgmt.msc
4. Click **View > Show hidden devices**. This will display devices that are not connected to the computer but Windows still reserves space for them.
5. Go to **Ports (COM & LPT)** and expand that section.
6. Remove all devices in the list of ports that are grayed out but have a specific COM port number assigned to them. Right click on the grayed out device, choose **Uninstall**, and then **OK** in the dialog box that appears.
7. When finished troubleshooting, close the Device Manager.
8. Type **exit** in the Command Prompt

Where can I find ports in the registry?

You can find the information on FTDI VCP devices in the registry under the following paths -

For Windows XP and Windows 2000:

`HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Enum\FTDIBUS\VID_VID+PID_PID+Serial_Number\0000\DeviceParameters\PortName`

where **VID** is the VID used, **PID** is the PID used and **Serial_Number** is the device serial number.