

If you live in California and still rely on a traditional home phone, you have probably heard the rumor: “All landlines will be gone by 2027.” Some neighbors already received letters from carriers about changes to “copper” or “POTS” service. Others have watched technicians pull old wires off the poles on their street.

The truth is more complicated. Landlines as a concept are not disappearing overnight, but the **old copper network that powered telephone service for more than a century is being retired in stages**, and California is at the center of that transition.

This shift affects everything from how seniors call 911 to how small businesses run their phone systems. It also raises basic questions people are asking in searches every day: What year will landlines be phased out? Which companies still offer a landline? Can I just have a landline without internet? What is the best landline service for senior citizens?

Let us walk through what is actually happening, what California regulators have said so far, and what you can do if you still want or need a landline after 2027.

First, what do we mean by “landline” in 2026?

When most people say “landline,” they picture a corded phone plugged into a wall jack, with power from the phone line itself. Technically, that original service is called **POTS**: plain old telephone service.

There are three different things commonly grouped under “landline” today:

1. **Traditional copper POTS lines.** Analog, low voltage power comes from the phone company, so the phone often works in a power outage. This is what many Californians had from the old phone company in the 1980s and 1990s.
2. **Digital or fiber based landlines from phone or cable companies.** The phone plugs into a modem or fiber terminal. Calls travel as VoIP over a broadband network, even if the provider markets it as “home phone” or “voice.” In most homes this is what passes for a landline now.
3. **Fixed wireless home phone.** A box in your home connects to the cell network and provides a dial tone to regular handsets. AT&T and Verizon both sell this type of “wireless home phone,” and some rural carriers do the same.

When people ask whether landlines are being phased out, they are usually talking about the first category, the **original copper POTS network**. That is what carriers want to retire, and what California regulators are focused on.

What is changing in California by 2027?

From a regulatory perspective, the key concept is “**carrier of last resort**” (often shortened to COLR). In California, AT&T has historically been obligated to **Phone Systems Company California** provide basic landline service on request in its territory, even in unprofitable rural areas. That obligation was created when the old monopoly phone company, often just called “the phone company,” was broken up and competition was introduced.

AT&T has asked the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for permission to **end its COLR obligation for traditional copper based phone service**. The company’s argument, in plain language, is:

- The copper network is expensive to maintain.

- Most customers have moved to mobile or internet based voice.
- Modern alternatives, including VoIP and wireless home phone, now exist almost everywhere AT&T serves.

As of late 2024, the CPUC had **not** granted full statewide approval to abandon all copper landlines, and public hearings were still being held. The dates floating around, such as 2026 or 2027, usually refer to **proposed timelines** in filings, not a legally fixed cut off when all landlines will suddenly shut off.

Here is what a realistic timeline for California customers looks like, based on current trends and similar moves in other states.

1. **Regulatory decisions in phases.** The CPUC is likely to approve copper retirement in certain areas once it is convinced that alternatives are available, reliable, and fairly priced. That may start around the middle of the decade, but it will roll out area by area.
2. **Migration, not instant shut off.** Even after approval in a given area, carriers typically must notify customers many months in advance, then offer a migration path to fiber voice, VoIP, or a wireless home phone product.



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3. **Targeted protection for vulnerable users.** Regulators usually place special conditions around seniors, people with disabilities, and customers with medical monitoring devices or no mobile coverage. That can include extended timelines, special pricing, or required backup power provisions.

The short answer to the anxious question “Will I lose my landline in 2027?” is: you are unlikely to wake up one day with a dead phone and no notice, but **you should expect your carrier to pressure or eventually require you to move away from copper POTS, especially if you are in an area where fiber or strong mobile coverage exists.**

Will landlines be “phased out” entirely?

This is where wording matters.

POTS over copper, as a **technology**, is being phased out. Many central offices no longer accept new orders for traditional analog lines. Large providers have petitioned the FCC and state regulators to retire copper plant where fiber or cable is available.

However, **landline as a user experience** - a familiar desk phone on the counter, with a 10 digit number for your home - will almost certainly persist long after 2027. It just will not run on the same infrastructure that existed in 1973.

If you strip away the nostalgia, a modern “landline” is simply:

- A phone number.
- A service that connects that number to the public telephone network.
- A device in your home or office that rings and lets you talk.

That can ride on copper, coaxial cable, fiber, or 4G and 5G radio. Technically they are all business phone systems of one sort or another, scaled down for home use.

So the realistic expectation is:



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- **Copper POTS will steadily disappear between now and the early 2030s.**
- **Home phone style service will remain readily available**, just over VoIP, cable, or wireless.

Which companies still offer landline service in California?

If you are in California today, you can still get a landline type service from several categories of providers.

The main ones are:

- **Legacy phone companies.** AT&T remains the largest, along with smaller incumbents like Frontier in some areas. They may provide copper, fiber, or a hybrid depending on your address.
- **Cable companies offering phone bundles.** Comcast (Xfinity), Spectrum, and Cox all offer digital home phone over their cable networks. Technically these are VoIP, but they feel like ordinary landlines to the user.
- **Independent VoIP providers.** Companies such as Ooma, Vonage, and many smaller providers deliver home and business phone over any internet connection. Ooma, for example, often targets people asking “Can I just have a landline without internet?” by explaining that you will at least need some kind of broadband to feed their box.
- **Wireless carriers’ home phone products.** AT&T Wireless, Verizon, and T-Mobile each offer a box that sits in your home and connects ordinary phones to the mobile network.

If your question is “Which companies still offer a landline without bundling with internet,” the honest answer is: **very few, and it is shrinking every year.** There are still some pure voice plans from the old phone companies, but they are often more expensive than a VoIP option plus basic internet, and they are under the most pressure to be retired.

What about cost: who is the cheapest landline provider?

Pricing changes constantly, but some patterns hold.

AT&T, Frontier, and similar incumbents still list basic voice only plans, often around the 20 to 40 dollars per month mark, before taxes and fees. Many seniors ask, “How much is an AT&T landline per month for seniors?” The carrier has historically offered discounted Lifeline or senior plans in some regions, but availability and price vary by zip code, and in some cases the discounted plan still requires certain bundles.

Cable companies usually sell phone as part of a **triple play** or at least a double play, which is not very helpful if you really only want a landline. The per line price can be reasonable when bundled, but the overall monthly bill climbs once promotional rates expire.

Independent VoIP providers, especially those targeting home users, often win the “Who is the cheapest landline provider?” contest on raw price. A typical setup might cost:

- A one time purchase of an adapter box.
- A recurring fee in the 10 to 20 dollars per month range, including nationwide calling.

The trade off is that you must provide your own internet connection, and you are responsible for backup power if you want the phone to survive an outage.

For senior citizens on fixed incomes, the cheapest headline price is not always the best fit. Reliability, ease of use, and support matter a lot more when 911 calls and medical devices are involved.

The best landline service for senior citizens: what actually matters

When families ask which is the best landline phone provider for seniors, they usually care about three things: reliability in emergencies, simplicity, and support when something breaks.

A few practical points from real households I have seen:

- **Power and backup.** Traditional copper lines used to work when the power went out because the line powered the handset. VoIP lines coming from a modem or fiber terminal often die when the electricity fails unless you install a battery backup. Some carriers in California are required to offer 8 hours or more of backup for customers who rely on the line for emergency calls, but many seniors do not know they must request or maintain it.
- **Physical phones.** The simplest landline phone for seniors is usually a corded or large button cordless set with strong volume and a clear caller ID display, nothing fancy. Big brand names such as Panasonic, AT&T branded hardware, and VTech still build these. The operating system of the handset is intentionally basic; that is an advantage for older users who find smartphones overwhelming.
- **Avoiding accidental outages.** With POTS, you could accidentally unplug every gadget in the house and the phone would still work, because the wiring was separate. With VoIP, unplugging the modem or router kills the phone too. For some seniors, that is a real risk. I have seen more than one case where a visiting relative moved a power strip and Grandma's phone silently went dead.

For many elders who say, "What is the easiest phone for an elderly person?", a **simple mobile phone with large buttons and a generous speaker** can be just as practical as a landline. The key is to avoid overcomplicated smartphones unless the person wants the extra features.

Do landlines still work without internet?

Copper POTS lines do, at least while the network remains in place. They do not require your home to have broadband or wifi, and in many cases they even work during a power outage because of line power from the central office.

VoIP or digital landlines, whether from a cable company or an independent provider, **do not work without some sort of internet style connection**. Even if the provider brands it as "digital voice," it rides on the same coax or fiber as your internet access. If the modem is off, the dial tone disappears.

That leads to a common misunderstanding behind the question: "Can I just have a landline without internet?" In 2026, that is really two questions:

- Can I still order a copper POTS line with no broadband at all?
- Can I get home phone over another technology without paying for a full internet plan?

In dense urban parts of California, the first is already difficult or impossible. In more rural areas, some incumbent carriers still support voice only plans, but they are exactly the services under pressure to be retired.

For the second, fixed wireless home phone or a dedicated VoIP line paired with a basic low speed internet tier can be a practical compromise, but it is no longer the single bill for "just a phone line" that people remember.

Classic dialing codes: *82, *77, *69 and what they still do

Many landline users grew up with star codes long before smartphones existed. Some of them still function on digital voice lines today.

- ***69** is the familiar "last call return" code. On many landline type services, dialing *69 will announce or call back the last number that rang you. Some providers charge per use, and it may not work for blocked or anonymous calls.

- ***82** is one of the caller ID blocking controls. Typically, if you always block your caller ID, dialing *82 before a number lets you unblock your ID for that single call. For example, you might dial *82, then the 10 digit number, when calling a friend who does not accept anonymous calls.
- ***77** often activates anonymous call rejection. On many systems, dialing *77 blocks calls from numbers that withhold their caller ID. Dialing *87 usually deactivates it. The exact behavior is carrier dependent.

On modern VoIP and mobile lines, some of these features have moved into account portals or smartphone settings, but quite a few digital “home phone” products still support the old star codes for backward compatibility.

A short detour through history: from the 1980s phone company to dial up internet

To understand why this transition is emotional, it helps to recall how central landlines were to daily life.

In the 1980s, the **old phone company** in most of the United States was a regional Bell operating company, descended from AT&T’s original monopoly. People knew the name on the bill more than the corporate structure: Pacific Bell in California, Bell Atlantic on the East Coast, Southwestern Bell in Texas. When someone asks, “What was the old phone company called?” they usually mean Ma Bell or their local Bell subsidiary.

Long distance was expensive, and you paid by the minute. The **big 5 phone companies** or **major telecommunications companies** of that era were essentially AT&T and its regional spin offs. By the 1990s and 2000s, they consolidated into the modern AT&T Inc. And Verizon, while other players like Sprint rose and eventually exited the landline business.

The same copper pairs that carried voice also carried **dial up internet**. Customers remember names like AOL, CompuServe, Prodigy, EarthLink, NetZero, and local ISPs. Those were the old internet dial up providers that many now remember with a mix of nostalgia and horror.

Before AOL became the punchline for “you have got mail,” people accessed early networks such as ARPANET and various university systems. In the early 1970s, researchers did not talk about “the internet” the way we do today, but about internetworking experiments and protocols like TCP/IP. The phrase “What was the internet called in 1973?” really points at **ARPANET and related academic networks**, not a public brand.

All of that information moved over the same copper telephone network that is now being retired. That is one reason some customers feel like they are losing a piece of history when they are told their old landline must be replaced with a modem based device.

How business phone systems are changing alongside home lines

Residential landlines are only half the story. Many small businesses in California still run **business phone systems** based around analog trunks or digital T1/PRI lines from the phone company.

Over the last decade, most of those have migrated to one of two models:

- **On premises PBX systems connected to SIP trunks over internet.**
- **Cloud based phone systems**, where each desk phone connects directly to a hosted service.

When owners ask “What is the best business phone system?”, the right answer tends to depend on size and reliability needs. A five person law office in Fresno has different requirements than a 200 seat call center in Los Angeles. But the direction of travel is clear: the physical copper in the street is no longer the main constraint. The focus is on internet uptime, redundancy across data centers, and integration with mobile devices.

Business owners who still have classic analog lines feeding a key system should treat the 2027 chatter as a serious nudge: **start a migration plan now**, before a forced cut off date arrives.

Practical steps for California landline users between now and 2027

All the policy debates in Sacramento and at the CPUC are important, but at the household level, what matters is what you actually need to do in the next few years.

Here is a concise checklist that covers most situations.

1. **Find out what you have today.** Look at your phone bill. Identify whether your line is still copper POTS, or a digital voice product that already runs through a modem or fiber terminal.
2. **Check your alternatives.** Use your address on the websites of at least two providers beyond your current one. See whether cable phone, fiber voice, or fixed wireless home phone is available.
3. **Map your critical uses.** List the devices and services that rely on your landline number: medical alert, alarm system, elevator phone, fax, point of sale terminal, or just a relative who only remembers that number.
4. **Discuss backup power.** If you move to VoIP or wireless home phone, ask the provider explicitly about battery backup. If they do not offer it, consider a small UPS to keep your modem and phone alive during outages.
5. **Plan number porting early.** If you want to keep your existing number, coordinate the change carefully. Canceling a line before your new provider has ported the number can make it much harder or impossible to recover.

If you go through those five steps now, you will be in a much stronger position whether the hard cutoff for copper in your neighborhood comes in 2027 or a few years later.

Common questions, answered plainly

What year will landlines be phased out?

There is no single national year when all landlines vanish. In California, 2027 is more a milestone in the regulatory conversation than a fixed end date. Traditional copper POTS is likely to keep shrinking through the late 2020s and early 2030s, with individual neighborhoods converted as alternatives become available and regulators sign off.

Which companies still offer a landline?

In most [Phone Systems Company California](#) of California, AT&T and Frontier still offer some form of landline type service. Cable companies such as Comcast, Spectrum, and Cox offer digital home phone. Independent VoIP providers and wireless carriers' home phone products round out the list. Pure copper voice only service without any digital component is already rare and will become rarer.

What is the cheapest landline phone service without internet?

Usually, a low cost VoIP provider paired with the lowest speed internet you can buy from any broadband provider comes out cheapest per month. However, that is not truly "without internet," since VoIP needs an IP connection. If you insist on no broadband at all, your options are limited to whatever copper service your local incumbent still sells, and that is seldom the cheapest.



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Do landlines still work in a power outage?

Copper POTS lines often do, at least for a while, because the phone company powers them. VoIP and fiber lines do not, unless you have backup power for the modem or terminal. Wireless home phones typically die when their base station battery runs out.

If you have medical or safety needs that require phone access in outages, insist on a backup solution, whether that is a battery, a generator, or a charged mobile phone.

Is there a simple alternative to Verizon or AT&T if I want a landline feel?

Yes. Many cable providers and third party VoIP companies can serve as an alternative to Verizon or AT&T while still giving you a physical handset and a 10 digit number. The best choice depends on which networks reach your address, and which company you trust to answer the phone when there is a problem.

Looking past 2027: what California customers should really expect

By 2027, the typical California neighborhood will still have people answering calls on a plastic handset on the kitchen counter. The dial tone may be coming from a fiber ONT screwed to the garage wall or a 5G home gateway in the living room instead of copper wires from a pole, but daily life will not look dramatically different for most.

The big changes will be under the surface:

- Technicians trained for decades on copper plant will spend more time working on fiber and wireless.
- Regulators will focus less on forcing carriers to maintain old infrastructure, and more on making sure modern options are affordable and reliable.

- The emergency services community will lean even more heavily on mobile and IP based 911, while still advocating for backup power and accessible options for seniors.

For California customers who still value a landline, the most productive mindset is not to fight the death of copper itself, but to **insist on safe, fair, and understandable replacements**. Ask blunt questions, read the fine print, verify that emergency calling and backup power are part of the package, and migrate on your terms rather than in a rushed panic when a cutoff notice arrives.

The copper era is ending. The idea of a stable, dependable phone number for your home does not have to vanish with it.