



# AT&T to End Landline Service in 2027

FACT SHEET

March 2026

Late in 2025, AT&T began mailing letters to customers announcing that it is ending "AT&T Residential Local Service," the traditional copper landline service, a.k.a. plain old telephone service.

## What do the letters mean?

For over a decade, the telecom giant has been making moves to phase out landline telephone service across the country. These letters represent the latest step in that process.

- One letter to current customers of AT&T's traditional landline service was sent around [November 2025](#) and again in [March 2026](#).<sup>\*</sup> It informed them that their service will be discontinued "on or after March 15, 2027."
- In another letter, sent in October 2025, AT&T announced that landline phone service would no longer be offered to new customers. (Plus, current customers could not make any changes to their existing service, and those who move could no longer get a traditional landline when they re-establish service in a new location.)

**\*Note:** AT&T sent out another round of letters in March 2026, because the phone company failed to send all customers required information in both English and Spanish in the first round of letters. It also failed to both mail and email customers who elect to receive bills and other communications via email.

## Can AT&T do this?

Yes, unfortunately. The company has received approval from state officials to move forward with ending its landline service in Illinois. Also, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has blessed an AT&T service--the digital phone options described later--as an acceptable alternative to traditional landline phone service, and "streamlined" the rules to facilitate copper retirement. (AT&T has announced plans to retire its copper landline network nationwide by 2029.)

For many customers traditional landlines have served as a reliable, affordable connection to family and friends as well as necessities such as 911 service, home security systems and medical monitoring devices. So CUB worked for years to block AT&T from deregulating local phone service. Here's a brief history:

- AT&T's earliest attempts to deregulate local phone service began in a case at the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) in 2006. That led to a legal settlement between AT&T and CUB that created a series of low-cost, safe-harbor plans branded the "Consumer's Choice" plans.
- The fight then shifted to the Illinois General Assembly, where, for about a decade, CUB and other consumer advocates stopped AT&T from ending the "carrier of last resort" provision in the Illinois Telecommunications Act.

That provision required AT&T to offer landline service to customers in its Illinois territory who wanted it.

- However, in 2017 the General Assembly passed a rewrite of the Telecom Act that gave the green light to end landline service, pending approval from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). (**Note:** In 2022, AT&T was fined \$23 million by federal authorities for using bribery to pass the 2017 legislation.)
- Also in 2017, AT&T successfully lobbied to end the Telecom Act's requirement that it offer the low-cost Consumer's Choice plans. In the years since, AT&T has significantly increased the cost of plain old telephone service, driving more people off landlines.
- In 2025, the FCC blessed other AT&T phone options (see later in this article) as an acceptable alternative to traditional landlines, and adjusted the rules to facilitate copper retirement.

## How many customers does this impact?

These developments only impact AT&T landline customers. As of June of 2024, Illinois still had about 552,000 landlines--many, if not most, of those were with AT&T.

## Will CUB Continue the fight?

Yes! CUB believes there are a significant number of people who would continue to benefit from reasonably priced landline phone service. That is why we are taking the fight back to the Illinois General Assembly and pushing for legislation ([House Bill 4562/Senate Bill 3965](#)) that would require AT&T to operate its traditional copper landline network an additional five years.

## What are my options for phone service if I lose my landline?

You could replace your service with digital phone service, also called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), through AT&T or another telecom company. You could also opt for cellular (wireless) service and ask to transfer your number to your cell phone.

## What should I know about these phone options?

- The big difference between digital phone service and plain old telephone service is that calls travel over the Internet, instead of traditional phone lines. That means this service requires a broadband internet connection--and it also means without a battery backup digital phone service does not work when your electricity is down--or during an internet service outage.
- Wireless and digital services use Enhanced 911 service, or E911. While the technology is improving, there are certain emergencies--such as if you cannot verbally communicate your location--that E911 may have difficulty pinpointing

your exact location. In the case of digital phone service, ask your provider if you need to register your current address to ensure emergency services can locate your home.

- With digital phone service, you may be able to keep your current phone and phone number.

#### Here's a checklist of questions to ask about digital phone service options:

- Is the price you're offering an introductory rate that goes up after a certain time?
- Can I use the service with my current phone?
- Can I keep my current phone number?
- Does the service work with other services, such as fax machines, security systems, pacemakers, or other medical-monitoring devices?
- Does the service offer a battery backup in case there's a power outage?

#### What are options with AT&T?

AT&T's letters list alternatives to its Residential Local Service: the company's wireless service and two digital voice plans, AT&T Phone or AT&T Phone-Advanced (AP-A). AT&T Phone and Phone-Advanced cost roughly \$35-\$50 or more a month—plus a one-time fee for the equipment. The fee was listed as \$189, but AT&T may offer a discount.

**AT&T Phone:** Price range of about \$35 to \$45 a month, but always confirm the price and ask if it's an introductory rate that ends.

- Requires an internet connection, at an additional cost, either separately or as part of a bundled package.
- Allows you to keep your current phone number and your current phone (except rotary or pulse phones).
- Includes unlimited local and long-distance calling in the United States and to Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Northern Marianas. (Calls to additional countries will cost extra.)
- Includes multiple features, such as voice mail, call forwarding, caller ID, call waiting and three-way calling.
- Works with most security and medical monitoring systems.

**AT&T Phone – Advanced (AP-A):** Price range of about \$45 to \$50, but always confirm the price and ask if it's an introductory rate that ends after a certain period.

- AT&T says this phone service can work through its cellular network, or through a broadband internet connection (the broadband is at an additional cost). AT&T recommends placing the phone on the first or second floor near a window or outside wall for the best reception. If you do pay extra for broadband, the phone service will continue to work through that connection or the cellular network.
- Allows you to keep your current phone number and connect up to six devices—including your current phones (except rotary or pulse phones), fax machines, medical devices and security systems.
- Includes unlimited local and long-distance calling (inter-

national calls require an extra monthly fee).

- Includes multiple features, such as voice mail, call forwarding, caller ID, call waiting and three-way calling.
- Has a **24-hour battery backup**. (Additional batteries cost extra.) The battery backup only helps with a standard corded phone that doesn't require an external power source. For example, the battery won't help a cordless phone, and it won't help with other equipment, such as a Wi-Fi gateway or a modem—those will require separate backup batteries.

**Note:** The AT&T plans offer a do-it-yourself installation kit, but you can choose instead to have an AT&T technician do the installation at an extra cost.

#### Is there a new service or connection fee?

This is a good detail to confirm with the company. The AT&T Phone - Advanced does not appear have a sign-up fee associated with it. AT&T Phone plan may have a fee, depending on the broadband options available in your area.

#### What if my area does not offer a viable alternative for the landline I have now?

If you believe the loss of AT&T's traditional landline service will leave you without reliable phone service—including access to 911—with AT&T or any other provider, you can ask the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) to investigate.

Please submit a request in writing (or, if you received a letter from AT&T, you can sign and return a copy of the letter) to:

**Chief Clerk of the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC)**  
527 East Capitol Avenue  
Springfield, Illinois 62701

In your request, make sure to include a reference to the notice you received from AT&T and the date of the notice. Based on the latest information from AT&T, the deadline is **May 19, 2026**, so mail this request as soon as possible. If you have questions, please call the ICC at **1-800-524-0795**.

#### A few notes:

- Please know that the ICC investigation merely has to find that you have one phone alternative in your area.
- The deadline to request an ICC investigation originally was in January, but AT&T submitted another round of letters ([see an example here](#)) in March 2026 and extended the deadline to May 19. AT&T has confirmed to CUB that they will consider all investigation requests received so far and all requests up until the new May 19 deadline. So anyone who has already submitted a request, regardless of when it was received, does not need to submit a new one. Any customers who missed the opportunity previously will be able to submit a request now.

#### What if I have questions?

First, call AT&T, at **1-800-288-2020**, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. – 7 p.m., Saturday.

If you are unable to obtain a response from AT&T, you can call CUB's Consumer Hotline, **1-800-669-5556**, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and we will do our best to find you the answers.