

If you live in California and you care about having a reliable phone during emergencies, you have probably heard some version of this: “Landlines are going away in 2027” or “Soon you will have to use internet for phone calls.”

The truth is more complicated. You can still get a landline-style service without buying home internet in much of California, but the underlying technology, providers, and rules have shifted under our feet.

I work with communications systems for clients who range from seniors in rural areas to small medical practices in Los Angeles. The same question keeps coming up:

Can I just have a landline without internet, and is it still worth it?

Let us break that down in practical terms, using California as the backdrop.

What “landline without internet” actually means now

When most people say “landline,” they mean what the old phone company provided in the 1980s: a copper pair from the pole to your house, powered from the central office, that kept working even when the neighborhood lost electricity.

There are now three main types of “landline” service you might encounter in California:

1. Traditional copper POTS (Plain Old Telephone Service).

This is the classic analog line. It does not require you to buy internet, and the line itself carries its own power. A simple corded phone can work for hours or days during a local power outage. This is what people usually mean when they ask whether landlines still work without internet.

2. Digital landline over fiber or cable.

Companies like AT&T, Frontier, Spectrum, and Xfinity provide voice over their broadband network (VoIP), but they can sell it without bundling full internet access. It still feels like a landline from the user’s perspective: same jacks on the wall, same dial tone, same features like *82 or *69. The line itself, however, depends on an adapter in your home and local power.

3. Wireless “home phone” services.

Carriers such as Verizon and T-Mobile offer a box that plugs into a normal phone and uses the cellular network in the background. You pay for phone service, not for home internet. It behaves like a landline for most people, but technically it is mobile.

Only the first category - classic copper POTS - truly operates without both internet and local power. The second and third categories do not require you to subscribe to broadband internet, but they rely on either your home electricity or built-in battery backup.

When someone asks “Do landlines still work without internet?” the honest answer is: yes, but fewer of them are the old copper kind, and the new ones have different trade-offs.

Where copper landlines still exist in California

California is in the middle of a long, messy transition. AT&T and other legacy carriers have been trying to retire copper lines for years, especially in dense urban areas where maintaining them is expensive. At the same time, the

California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has been cautious, because rural and low-income residents still depend on them.

Here is the practical reality I see on the ground:

- In many older neighborhoods and rural areas, you can still order a true POTS line from AT&T or Frontier.
- In some city blocks, the copper plant is still physically there but no longer offered to new customers. Residents are migrated to digital voice over fiber or fixed wireless instead.
- New housing developments are usually fiber or cable only. If you ask for a landline, you will get VoIP delivered over that infrastructure, whether or not you pay for internet.

The rumor that “you will lose your landline in 2027” comes from a mix of regulatory filings and national timelines for phasing out certain copper obligations. There is no single statewide shut-off date. Instead, each service area transitions as the network is upgraded.

If you want to know whether you can get a true copper landline at your address, you cannot rely on a generic answer. You must check your specific location with AT&T or Frontier and be very explicit that you want a basic POTS line, not “digital voice” or “home phone over the internet.”

Can you have a landline without internet service?

Yes. There are still several ways to have phone service without subscribing to home internet in California.

Here are the main options most homeowners and renters end up choosing when they say “no internet, just phone.”



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- Traditional POTS line from AT&T or Frontier, where available.

- Digital “voice only” plan over fiber or cable from providers like Spectrum, Xfinity, AT&T, or Frontier.
- Wireless home phone device from a mobile carrier such as Verizon or T-Mobile.
- A business-grade analog line from a competitive local exchange carrier (CLEC) for small offices that need fax, alarms, or a business phone system without internet.

Each of these behaves differently in a power outage, in earthquakes, and in how 911 calls are handled, which is where the real pros and cons come into focus.

Pros of landline service without internet

Reliability when it truly matters

The single strongest argument for a copper landline is emergency reliability. During major wildfires, PSPS (Public Safety Power Shutoff) events, or earthquakes, I have seen cell towers go down or saturate for hours. A copper POTS line fed from a central office miles away often keeps working, because it carries its own low-voltage power.

For older residents, especially those living alone or with medical conditions, this is not abstract. I have clients in Sonoma and Butte counties who kept phone service during extended outages solely because they maintained a copper landline and a cheap corded handset.

Digital and wireless home phone offerings can be reliable too, but only as long as their gateway devices and networks have backup power. California now requires certain VoIP and cable voice providers to offer battery backup options, typically covering at least 8 hours, sometimes 24, but you need to ask for it and maintain those batteries.

Simple user experience

For many seniors, the best phone is the one they already know how to use. Landline handsets have big buttons, predictable sound quality, and no app store popping up random alerts.

When people ask “What is the best landline service for senior citizens?” I usually say the best choice is a stable, local provider coupled with a very simple corded or cordless phone, not a flashy bundle. The actual handset matters as much as the network. Brands like Panasonic and VTech still make straightforward models with large keys, talking caller ID, and basic speed-dial buttons.

If you are searching for the simplest landline phone for seniors, look for fewer buttons, louder ringer options, and a physical “volume boost” key rather than tiny multi-function controls. That does more for everyday usability than any advanced calling feature.

No dependency on your home Wi-Fi

Many people have experienced the chain reaction: your cable modem dies, your Wi-Fi router reboots, your “phone over internet” line goes down, and suddenly you cannot call the provider to troubleshoot because the phone itself depends on that same network.

A landline service that does not depend on your in-home broadband breaks that loop. Even digital “voice only” from a cable provider usually uses a separate quality-of-service channel, so it is somewhat isolated from your Wi-Fi issues, though still reliant on their network and your local power.

Fixed physical address for 911

Traditional landlines automatically pass your service address to the 911 dispatcher. That is invaluable for callers who are panicked, hard of hearing, or non-native speakers.

Mobile phones and some wireless home phone services can also transmit location, but it may be estimated by GPS or cell tower rather than pinned to a verified street and unit number. For multi-unit buildings, that distinction matters.

Cons and hidden gotchas

Shrinking support for copper

If your house still has a POTS line today, you are living on a legacy network that your provider would like to retire. Technicians who really know the copper plant are retiring too. I still meet former Pacific Bell and GTE techs who spent the 1980s climbing poles and splicing cables; there are fewer young techs with that experience.

That does not make copper lines unusable, but repairs can be slower, parts harder to find, and support staff more eager to move you to digital alternatives.

Power dependence of newer “landlines”

Digital voice over fiber or cable, and wireless home phone units, all share one vulnerability: if your house loses electricity and you lack working battery backup, your phone dies with it.

For city dwellers whose outages are brief, an 8-hour battery might be fine. For people in fire-prone or remote regions, I advise checking how often your power has gone out in the last 3 years and for how long. If multi-day outages are common, copper POTS or a combination of cellular and generator backup might be more realistic.

Cost compared to mobile phones

The question “What is the cheapest landline phone service without internet?” has a moving answer, but in general you see these patterns in California:

- A bare-bones residential POTS line from AT&T often starts around 30 to 40 dollars per month before taxes and fees, and climbs above 50 when you add common features.
- Cable voice-only or fiber voice plans sometimes advertise in the 20 to 30 dollar range, but promotional pricing expires, and various surcharges appear.
- Wireless home phone units from the major mobile carriers can be in the 20 to 30 dollar range for unlimited local and long distance, especially for existing customers.

Mobile plans, especially prepaid, can undercut all of these on price per minute. That is one reason many low-income households have dropped landlines entirely. If your budget is tight and you have reliable cell coverage, you might find that the truly cheapest option is not a landline at all.

For seniors specifically, people often ask, “How much is an AT&T landline per month for seniors?” AT&T used to have more explicit senior discount plans. These have evolved into a patchwork of Lifeline and low-income programs, which vary by region. It is worth calling and [Phone Systems Company California](https://www.phone-systems-company.com/california) [mtinc.net](https://www.phone-systems-company.com/california) asking directly about Lifeline or senior options, but do not assume a simple, nationwide “senior landline plan” still exists.

Who still offers landline service in California?

The roster of companies that “still offer a landline” looks very different from the telephone companies of the 1980s. In that era, names like Pacific Bell, GTE, Contel, and later the regional Baby Bells were dominant. Before AT&T’s breakup, many people simply called it “the phone company” and everyone knew what they meant.

Those large incumbents merged, rebranded, or vanished. Some old phone companies no longer exist as consumer brands, replaced by AT&T, Verizon, Frontier, and a long tail of regional and competitive carriers.

Today, for most California households, the realistic choices for a traditional or landline-style phone include:

- AT&T (successor to Pacific Bell in much of California), offering a mix of copper POTS, digital voice over fiber, and wireless home phone.
- Frontier, which owns much of the former Verizon and GTE landline network in the state, particularly in parts of Southern California and rural areas.
- Cable operators such as Spectrum and Xfinity, providing cable-based digital voice lines.
- Mobile carriers like Verizon and T-Mobile that sell dedicated “home phone” boxes using their cellular networks.
- Smaller CLECs and VoIP providers that focus on business phone systems, often pairing office lines with PBXs or cloud phone services.

When people ask “What companies still offer landline service?” or “Which companies still offer a landline?” the honest answer is: many do, but each means something different by “landline” now. You need to ask what infrastructure they are using (copper, fiber, cable, or wireless) and what happens to the line when the power fails.

Special features still used on landlines: *82, *77, and *69

Even as technology shifts, a surprising number of star codes from the copper era still function on digital landlines.

On most California landline-style services:

- *82 usually unblocks your caller ID for the next call if you have it set to block by default. Useful when calling a business that rejects anonymous calls.
- *77 often turns on anonymous call rejection, which blocks calls from numbers that withhold caller ID. It can help reduce some robocalls, though not all.
- *69 typically activates “call return,” dialing back the last incoming number, sometimes with a small fee if you lack a bundled feature package.

These behaviors can vary by provider. Some modern VoIP and business phone system platforms implement similar functions through apps or web portals rather than star codes. If you rely on any of these, verify with the prospective provider before switching.

Landlines, seniors, and safety: what actually works best

For older adults, the question is rarely “Who has the best phone system?” in a technical sense. It is usually: which setup is least likely to fail when I need it, and which phone is easiest to use every day.

If a senior lives in a region where copper POTS is still supported and power outages are frequent, I still lean toward a classic landline with a big-button corded phone in at least one room, backed by a simple cordless system for convenience.

If copper is no longer available, a digital voice line with a properly installed battery backup and a straightforward handset is the next best thing. In fire-prone or earthquake-prone zones, I like to see a backup cellular phone as well, even if it is a basic flip phone.

When people ask “Which is the best landline phone provider for seniors?” they are usually thinking about price. Price matters, but clarity and reliability matter more. It is often worth spending a few extra dollars per month with a provider that has local technicians and a solid track record during storms or wildfire events.

On the handset side, the easiest phone for an elderly person typically has:

- Large, high-contrast buttons and screen text.
- Loud ringer with distinct tone and visual indicator.
- Simple voicemail access button or, better yet, answering machine built into the base.
- Minimal menus and no dependence on smartphones or apps.

A fancy smartphone or a complex business PBX may be impressive, but for a 90-year-old trying to reach a doctor at 3 a.m., simplicity wins every time.

Costs and “cheapest provider” questions

Pricing shifts constantly, but a few broad guidelines hold in California.

If your goal is the absolute lowest monthly bill for a home phone with no internet:



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- Wireless home phone devices are often the cheapest recurring option, especially when added to an existing mobile family plan.
- Cable and fiber voice-only promos can look cheap in the first year, then rise sharply. Read the post-promotion rate in the fine print.
- Copper POTS is rarely the cheapest, but it still has the strongest independence from local power and in-home hardware.

When someone asks “Who is the cheapest landline provider?” I usually urge them to think in terms of total cost over 3 to 5 years, including equipment, batteries, and any early termination fees. The cheapest sticker price today may not be the cheapest long term.

Also remember that taxes and regulatory fees on phone lines are often higher and more complex than on mobile plans. Lifeline discounts, where available, can narrow or reverse that gap for qualifying low-income or senior households.

Questions to ask providers before you sign up

Because so much depends on local infrastructure, calling a provider and asking precise questions is more useful than reading generic brochures. Use something like this checklist when you talk to sales or customer service:

- Is this a true copper POTS line, or is it digital voice over fiber, cable, or wireless?
- If my power goes out, how long will my phone keep working, and what battery backup options do you provide?
- Is this a promotional price, and what will my monthly bill look like (with fees) after the promo ends?
- How is my address delivered to 911, and does the service support medical alert devices, alarms, or fax machines if I use them?
- Are there contract terms or early-termination fees if I decide to switch later?

If the person on the phone cannot answer these, ask to speak with a technical representative or visit a local office, where staff sometimes have a better grasp of the physical network in your neighborhood.

How this fits into the bigger telecom picture

The landline story in California sits on top of a much larger telecommunications history. The big 5 or big 7 tech and phone companies people talk about today look nothing like the landscape in 1990, when AT&T’s long-distance business, IBM, and a young Microsoft were considered the giants, and the first internet service providers were just starting to market dial-up access.

Some of the old dial-up internet companies you might remember - early AOL, CompuServe, Prodigy, EarthLink, NetZero - built their services on top of those same copper lines. Before AOL took off, many households accessed early networks through university systems or commercial timesharing networks attached to what was, at its core, telephone infrastructure.

The modern internet has consumed much of that role, and smartphones dominate the list of top phone brands and operating systems. Android leads globally in smartphone OS share, Apple’s iOS dominates the high-end market, and security discussions revolve around which phone is least likely to be hacked. Billionaires and public figures debate whether to use an iPhone, a custom security-hardened device, or, in the case of Elon Musk, sometimes their own platform’s apps as a political stage.

Yet, for all that, a simple landline call to 911, riding on a pair of copper wires installed decades ago by companies whose names no longer exist, still saves lives in California every year.

Final thoughts: is a landline without internet still worth it?

If you live in California and are weighing whether to keep, add, or drop a landline without internet, the decision comes down to a few real-world factors:

How often does your power go out, and for how long?

How reliable is your cell coverage inside your home? Do you or your loved ones need a very simple, familiar phone that “just works”? Are you willing to pay a bit more each month for redundancy and peace of mind?

Copper landlines are slowly shrinking, and there is no credible date certain when they will vanish statewide, but they are not being expanded either. Digital voice and wireless home phone options can give you a landline-like experience without buying home **Phone Systems Company California** internet, as long as you understand their power and network dependencies.

The safest approach is to treat phone service as part of your overall resilience plan. For some households, that means a copper POTS line and a corded handset remain non-negotiable. For others, a well-backed-up digital line plus mobile phones is enough.

What you should not do is assume that “a landline is a landline.” Ask hard questions, understand the infrastructure behind your dial tone, and choose the option that fits how you actually live, not just how the brochure describes it.