

# Is My Landline Going Away?

## THE 60-SECOND VERSION

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- 1 There is no single nationwide switch-off day, and no announced date for Ohio.
- 2 Your phone keeps working until your own carrier retires the copper on your street.
- 3 You will almost always keep your same phone number.
- 4 The one real change: most replacements need electricity, so plan a backup.
- 5 You don't have to decide today — but it's smart to know your options now.

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## Is My Landline Going Away? What the Copper Shutdown Means for Your Street

What the copper phone shutdown means for your home — in plain English.

————— **An Extended Guide · No. 1716** —————

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## SUMMARY

## The 60-Second Version

In a hurry? Here's the whole thing on one page. The “landline is going away” headlines are about the old copper wiring the phone companies have run for decades. They're retiring it a neighborhood at a time and moving people to fiber, internet-based phone, or a cellular box. Your phone number and your handset can come right along.

- There is no single nationwide switch-off day, and no announced date for Ohio.
- Your phone keeps working until your own carrier retires the copper on your street.
- You will almost always keep your same phone number.
- The one real change: most replacements need electricity, so plan a backup.
- You don't have to decide today — but it's smart to know your options now.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

If you've gotten a letter from your phone company about “network changes” or “fiber upgrade,” that's this. Don't panic and don't sign anything on a doorstep — read it, and call me if it's confusing.

## 1. First, Take a Breath

*Nobody is cutting your phone off tomorrow.*

Let me start with the part that matters most, because I've had a lot of worried calls about this. Your home phone is not about to go dead. The news stories about the landline “shutdown” are real, but they describe a slow, planned change that's been underway for years and will keep rolling out gradually. For most folks reading this, nothing changes this month, or maybe this year.

What's actually being retired is the old copper wiring — the physical pair of wires that has carried your dial tone since the rotary-phone days. The phone companies want out of the copper business because it's expensive to maintain and most of the country has moved to fiber, internet, and cell phones. So they're replacing copper with newer lines, one area at a time.

Here's the honest framing I give every customer: this is a change to plan for, not an emergency to react to. You have time to understand your choices and pick the one that fits your home. That's all this guide is — a calm walk through what's happening and what you can do.

**TIP**

If you want the short version, read the 60-Second page and the cheat sheet at the back. The middle chapters are there when you want the details.

## 2. What “Copper Retirement” Really Means

*The dial tone stays. The wires behind it change.*

For a hundred years, a home phone worked over a copper pair that ran from your house back to the phone company. It had one lovely feature: it drew its own power from the phone line, so it kept working even when the electricity was out. That's the thing people rightly miss.

“Copper retirement” means the phone company stops maintaining that old copper and carries your phone a different way instead — usually over fiber-optic line, over your internet connection, or over a cellular signal. In March 2026 the Federal Communications Commission passed an order that made it simpler and faster for carriers to do this. So the pace has picked up, but it's still happening street by street.

From your chair, the change is usually small: you may get a new box, your phone plugs into it instead of the wall jack, and your number and ringer stay the same. The one genuine difference is power. A fiber or internet phone needs electricity, so it won't work in an outage unless you've added a battery. We'll cover that — it's easy to solve.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

“VoIP” just means your call travels as internet data instead of over copper. It's not complicated or worse — your grandkids' calls have worked this way for years. It just needs power.

## 3. Is MY Phone Actually Affected?

*How to tell where your street stands.*

This is the question everyone really wants answered, and the honest answer is: it depends on who your phone company is and where you live. There is no single national shutdown date, and as of now there's no announced statewide shutdown date for Ohio. It's being done area by area.

Here in Portage County we're served by a few different companies depending on the road you're on — Windstream (they brand it Kinetic) in a lot of the rural stretches, plus AT&T, Frontier, and the cable company. Each one is on its own timeline. So the way to get a real answer is to check your own provider, not a national headline.

- 1 Find a recent phone bill and note the company name at the top.
- 2 Look for any recent letter or email about “network changes,” “fiber,” or “discontinuing” service — keep it.
- 3 Call the number on your bill and ask plainly: “Are you retiring copper on my street, and by when?”
- 4 If you can't get a straight answer, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) tracks these changes for Ohio customers.
- 5 Still stuck? Call me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll help you find out.

#### WATCH OUT

Scammers love a “your landline is shutting off” story. No real phone company will demand a gift-card payment or your Social Security number over the phone to “keep your line on.” Hang up and call the number on your bill.

## 4. Who Serves Portage County

*The companies you're most likely dealing with.*

I don't push any one company, and I don't earn a penny from any of them. But it helps to know the players so a letter in your mailbox makes sense. In and around Atwater, Ravenna, Kent, Streetsboro, Aurora, and Rootstown, these are the names you'll run into.

- Windstream / Kinetic — common in rural stretches; moving customers toward fiber and internet-based phone where they've built it out.
- AT&T — retiring copper broadly across the country and steering people to its newer phone service and wireless.
- Frontier — another traditional local phone company upgrading to fiber.
- Spectrum (the cable company) — offers a “digital voice” home phone that runs over the same line as the internet.

If your bill shows a company not on this list, that's fine — the same questions apply. The point is to deal with your actual provider and get your own street's timeline, because they truly do differ.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Being moved to fiber is usually good news: it's faster and more reliable than old copper. The phone part is the only piece that needs a little planning, mostly around power backup.

## 5. Your Four Honest Options

*There's no single right answer — only the right fit.*

When the change reaches you, you've basically got four paths. I'll go deeper on each later, but here's the lay of the land so the rest of the guide makes sense.

- Take your internet or cable company's home phone (Spectrum Voice, AT&T Phone, Kinetic Voice, Xfinity Voice). Simplest if you already have their internet — your phone plugs into their box.
- Use a standalone internet phone (VoIP) like Ooma or Vonage. You buy a small adapter and your regular phone plugs into it.
- Get a cellular home phone base. A little box runs on a cell signal — no internet needed — and your cordless phones plug into it.
- Keep your copper line for now. Perfectly fine until your carrier actually retires it; just have a plan ready for when the notice comes.

The best fit depends on three things: whether you have home internet, how good your cell signal is, and how much you care about the phone working in a power outage. We'll sort that out together.

## 6. If You Have Home Internet

*The cable or internet-company phone is the easy path.*

If you already pay for internet from the cable company or a provider like Spectrum, AT&T, or Kinetic, the simplest move is usually to add their home phone service. Your call rides over the internet you already have, and your existing cordless or corded phone plugs into their modem or a little phone box.

The upsides: one company, one bill, and they handle the setup. The things to ask about: the monthly cost once any promotion ends, whether unlimited U.S. calling is included, and — most important — whether a battery backup is included or extra, so the phone works in an outage.

**TIP**

Ask them to port (move) your existing number so you keep it, and ask them NOT to make you cancel your old line first — the number has to stay active until the move finishes.

## 7. If Your Internet Is Spotty (or You Don't Have It)

*A cellular home phone base may fit best.*

Plenty of folks out in the county either don't have home internet or have the slow, unreliable kind. For them, a cellular home phone base is often the closest thing to the old landline feel. It's a small box that runs on a cell signal — the same network as a cell phone — and your normal cordless phones plug right into it.

There's no internet to set up and no technician visit. Verizon and T-Mobile offer these, and so do independents like Community Phone and others. Most have a built-in battery, so they keep working through a short power cut, which is a real plus. The one requirement is a decent cell signal in the room where you'll keep the box.

**WATCH OUT**

Before you commit, test the cell signal where the box will live — not by the window where you get bars, but where the phone will actually sit. Weak signal means dropped calls.

## 8. The Standalone Internet Phone (VoIP)

*Ooma, Vonage, and the little adapter box.*

If you have reliable internet and want to trim the phone part of your bill, a standalone VoIP adapter is worth a look. You buy a small box once, plug it into your internet router, and plug your regular phone into the box. From there your calls travel over the internet.

Ooma is the one most of my customers end up with: you buy the little Telo adapter once, and basic calling within the U.S. is free after that — you just pay the taxes and fees, which run a few dollars a month. Vonage is another, sold as a monthly plan and especially handy if you call other countries. Both let you keep your number.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Standalone VoIP needs power and internet, so it goes quiet in an outage unless you add a battery or pick a model with a cellular backup built in (Ooma makes one). More on backups in its own chapter.

## 9. What About Keeping Copper a While Longer?

*A fine choice — with one condition.*

You do not have to switch the day you read this. If your copper line still works and your carrier hasn't sent a retirement notice for your street, you're allowed to keep it. The one condition I'd put on that: have your plan ready, so a sudden letter doesn't send you scrambling.

The advantage of copper is the one we keep mentioning — it powers itself, so it rides through outages. The disadvantage is that it's on borrowed time, the monthly cost often creeps up, and repairs can get slow as the companies stop investing in it.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

If you keep copper, keep this guide by the phone. When the notice comes, you'll already know your options and can make a calm choice instead of a rushed one.

## 10. Will 911 Still Work?

*Yes — with one setup step you shouldn't skip.*

This is the safety question, and it deserves a clear answer. Yes, 911 works on the newer phone services. The difference is that an internet or cellular phone doesn't have a fixed copper address the way the old line did, so your provider keeps a “registered location” — the street address they send to 911 when you call.

When you set up a new service, make sure that address is correct, and update it if you ever move the box to another home. Many providers let you dial 933 to hear your registered address read back as a test, without placing a real 911 call. It's worth doing once.

**WATCH OUT**

An internet or cellular home phone can't call 911 during a power or internet outage unless it has a battery. Always keep a charged cell phone as your final way to reach 911.

## 11. Don't Forget Your Medical Alert and Alarm

*These can quietly stop working after a switch.*

Here's the one that catches people, and it's important. A lot of older medical alert pendants and home security or fire alarm panels were built to dial out over a copper landline. When you switch to internet or cellular phone, those devices can quietly fail — the button gets pushed and the signal never reaches the monitoring center.

So before you switch anything, call your medical alert company and your alarm company and tell them what you're doing. They'll tell you whether your equipment is compatible or whether you need a cellular version that doesn't rely on a phone line at all. After the switch, test the system so you know it truly reaches help.

**WATCH OUT**

Do not assume your medical alert or alarm "just works" on a new phone line. Test it. This is exactly the kind of check I do on a visit, because it's too important to guess.

## 12. You Can Keep Your Same Number

*Almost always — here's the one rule.*

People worry about losing the number they've had for decades — the one on every form, every friend's address book, every doctor's file. Good news: you can almost always keep it. Moving a number from one company to another is called "porting," and the new provider does the work for you.

There's one rule that matters more than any other: do not cancel your old service first. The number has to stay active for the port to work. Cancel too early and you can lose the number for good. Let the new company confirm the move is complete, and only then is the old line closed.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

A landline port often takes a week or two, not an afternoon. Your phone keeps working the whole time — the switch happens on a scheduled day at the very end.

## 13. The Power-Outage Question

*The one real trade-off, and how to fix it.*

If there's a single reason people love the old copper line, it's that it worked in a storm when the lights were out. Any replacement that runs on internet or house power loses that — unless you add a battery. The good news is that's a small, solvable thing.

- Ask your provider for their battery backup module — many cable and fiber phone services offer one that keeps the phone alive for hours.
- Put a small battery backup (a UPS) on the modem, router, and phone box so the whole chain stays up for a while.
- Choose a cellular home base, which comes with its own battery.
- Always keep a charged cell phone as the final backup for 911.

**TIP**

A battery backup for your internet gear is one of the most worthwhile little purchases a home can make — it keeps your phone and your internet alive through the short outages we get around here. Happy to set one up for you.

## 14. How to Decide Without the Stress

*Three questions point you to your answer.*

You don't need to become a telephone expert. Answer three plain questions and the right path usually becomes obvious.

- 1 Do you have reliable home internet? If yes, your internet company's phone or a VoIP adapter are easy fits. If no, lean toward a cellular base.
- 2 How's your cell signal in the house? Strong signal makes a cellular base a great like-for-like landline. Weak signal steers you to internet phone.
- 3 How much do you need the phone during an outage? If it's critical (medical reasons, for instance), prioritize a battery backup or a cellular base.

If you're still unsure after those three, that's genuinely fine — it's what I'm here for. I can look at your setup, your signal, and your bill, and give you a straight recommendation with no sales pitch, because I'm not selling you a phone company.

## 15. A Closer Look at the Cable-Company Phone

*What Spectrum Voice and the like are really like.*

Since a lot of folks around here already have cable internet, let me spend a minute on what their home phone is actually like to live with. The call travels over the same line as your internet. They give you a modem or a small phone box with a telephone jack on the back, and you plug your existing phone into it. Your number and handset stay the same, so day to day it feels like the old phone.

Most of these plans bundle unlimited calling across the U.S., caller ID, call waiting, and voicemail. The catch is almost always the promotional price: it looks cheap for a year, then climbs. When you sign up, ask what the regular price is after the promo, and whether adding the phone actually lowers your bundle or quietly raises it.

- Ask whether a battery backup for the phone box is included or extra.
- Ask them to keep (port) your current number, and not to cancel your old line until the move is done.
- Ask what happens to the phone during an internet outage — and plan a backup accordingly.

### TIP

If you ever drop cable TV but keep internet, double-check your home phone rides along — sometimes it's bundled in a way that changes when you cut the TV part.

## 16. A Closer Look at Ooma and Vonage

*The buy-it-once internet phones.*

These are the standalone internet phones — you don't need to buy them from your internet company. You get a small adapter, plug it into your router, and plug your telephone into the adapter. From there it works like any phone.

Ooma is the one I set up most often. You pay once for the Telo adapter, and basic calling inside the U.S. is free after that — you only owe the taxes and fees, which come to a few dollars a month. There's a paid Premier tier with extras like better voicemail and a second number, but most people are happy on the free basic service. Vonage is sold as a monthly plan and is a good pick if you regularly call other countries.

Both let you keep your number, and both are genuinely senior-friendly once they're set up — the phone on the counter doesn't change. The setup is the fiddly part, which is exactly the sort of thing I can do in a few minutes on a visit.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Because these run on your internet, they stop in a power or internet outage — unless you choose a model with a built-in cellular backup and battery, like the Ooma Telo LTE. If outage coverage matters, say so up front.

## 17. A Closer Look at the Cellular Home Base

*The no-internet, like-for-like option.*

The cellular home base deserves its own close look, because for a certain kind of customer it's the perfect answer. Picture a little box about the size of a paperback. Inside is essentially a cell phone's guts. You plug your normal cordless phone into it, and it connects your calls over the cellular network — no internet account required.

This is the closest thing to the old landline experience: no technician, no internet bill, and a built-in battery so it keeps working through a short power cut. The whole requirement is a usable cell signal in the spot where the box will sit. Verizon and T-Mobile both offer these, and so do independent companies that aren't tied to one carrier.

**WATCH OUT**

Test the signal where the box will actually live before you commit — a back bedroom or a basement can be much weaker than the kitchen window. If the signal's marginal, a small signal booster or a different carrier can make the difference.

## 18. Understanding Your Phone Bill

*Where the money actually goes.*

One quiet reason the copper shutdown can be good news is money. A traditional copper landline is often one of the more expensive ways to have a phone, once you add up the line charge, the long-distance, and the taxes and fees that pile on. Many people are paying for features they never use.

When you look at a replacement, compare the all-in monthly cost, not the headline number. A buy-once VoIP adapter can drop your monthly phone cost to just taxes and fees. A

cellular base is usually a flat monthly amount. A cable-company phone depends heavily on your bundle. I always tell people to write down what they pay now, then compare honestly — sometimes switching saves real money every month.

- Dig out last month's phone bill and find the true total, taxes included.
- Note which features you actually use: voicemail, caller ID, long distance.
- Compare the all-in cost of each option against that real number.
- Watch for promo prices that jump after a year.

**TIP**

Prices change constantly, so I'm not going to print numbers that'll be stale by next season. Check each provider's current pricing, or let me pull the real figures for your situation on a visit.

## 19. A Simple Moving-Day Plan

*How a switch actually goes, start to finish.*

If you decide to switch, here's the order I follow so nothing goes dark and nobody loses a number. It's not complicated when you take it one step at a time.

- 1 Pick your new service based on the three questions (internet, signal, outage needs).
- 2 Sign up and tell them to PORT your existing number — give them a recent bill so the account details match.
- 3 Leave your old line active. Do not cancel it yet.
- 4 When the new box arrives, set it up and plug in your phone; register your 911 address and test it (dial 933 if your provider allows).
- 5 Call your medical alert and alarm companies; confirm compatibility and test those devices.
- 6 Only after the number has moved and everything's tested, let the old line be cancelled.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

The number move happens on a scheduled day near the end. Your phone keeps working the whole time, so there's no stretch where you're without a line.

## 20. Common Mistakes I See

*The slip-ups that cause the headaches.*

After helping a lot of people through this, the same few mistakes come up again and again. None of them are your fault — the companies don't exactly make it clear — but knowing them ahead of time saves a lot of grief.

- Cancelling the old line before the number moves — the number can be lost for good. Never cancel first.
- Forgetting the power backup, then being surprised the phone's dead in a storm.
- Assuming the medical alert or alarm still works — it may not. Test it.
- Signing something handed over at the door without reading it.
- Chasing the cheapest headline price and ignoring the after-promo cost.

### WATCH OUT

If anyone pressures you to decide right now — on the phone or at the door — that pressure itself is the warning sign. A real switch can always wait a day while you think.

## 21. Your Cordless Phones Still Work

*You probably don't need to buy a new handset.*

Here's a bit of relief: in almost every case, the phones you already own will work with the new service. Modern cordless phones from Panasonic, VTech, and AT&T-brand plug into a jack on the new box, not directly into the wall copper, so they don't care how the call travels.

If you are going to replace a handset while you're at it, it's a nice chance to get senior-friendly features: big buttons, a loud or boosted earpiece, talking caller ID that announces who's calling, and a block button for junk calls. But that's an upgrade, not a requirement — your current phone will do fine.

### GOOD TO KNOW

Keep at least one old-fashioned corded phone in the house if you can. On some setups a simple corded phone will work off the box's battery when a cordless base won't — a handy backup.

## 22. Telling Your Family What You Chose

*So the people who help you are in the loop.*

A lot of the calls I get about this actually come from adult kids helping a parent from out of town. If that's your situation — on either end — it's worth writing down a few things so everyone knows how the phone works now.

- Which company provides the phone now, and the account phone number.
- Whether there's a power-outage backup, and how long it lasts.
- That the medical alert and alarm were checked and tested.
- The best backup way to reach the person if the home phone is down — usually a cell number.

It sounds fussy, but when a storm knocks the power out, the family member two states away will be awfully glad they know whether Mom's phone still works and how else to reach her.

## 23. Questions I Get All the Time

*Quick, plain answers.*

Will my phone number change? Almost never — you keep it by porting, as long as you don't cancel the old line first.

Do I have to get internet to have a phone? No. A cellular home base gives you a home phone with no internet account at all.

Is the new phone harder to use? No — the handset on your counter works the same. The only new thing is a box that lives near your internet gear or in a spot with good cell signal.

What if the power goes out? With a battery backup or a cellular base, the phone keeps working for a while. Always keep a charged cell phone for emergencies as well.

### GOOD TO KNOW

If your question isn't here, it's probably one I've answered a hundred times — just call and ask. There's no charge to ask a question over the phone.

## 24. When to Just Call Me

*You don't have to do any of this alone.*

I wrote this guide so you'd understand what's happening and feel calm about it. But understanding a thing and wanting to do it yourself are two different matters, and there's no shame in handing it off. Setting up a new phone box, moving your number, registering 911, adding a battery, and testing your alarm is exactly the kind of visit I do every week.

I come to you, here in Portage County and the nearby towns. The first in-home visit is a flat ninety-nine dollars, and if a problem can be handled without a trip, I offer remote help too. If you're not completely happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's the whole deal — no fine print.

### TIP

When you call, my assistant Sophie may answer and take down the details so I can call you back — she's there so you always reach a friendly voice, not a dead end.

## 25. What Happens to Your Internet

*If your phone and internet share the old line.*

For some folks, the copper line doesn't just carry the phone — it also carries an older style of internet called DSL. If that's you, retiring the copper affects both. The good news is the replacement is almost always an upgrade: fiber or a newer internet service that's faster and steadier than DSL ever was.

If your internet is on that old line, ask your carrier what the plan is for both the phone and the internet together, so you're not solving them separately. Often they'll move you to fiber and set up a new phone over it in the same visit. Just be sure the phone piece and your backup are handled, not forgotten in the excitement about faster speeds.

### GOOD TO KNOW

Faster internet is genuinely worth having — it makes video calls with the grandkids smoother and streaming far less frustrating. The phone change riding along with it is the small tail on a good dog.

## 26. Snowbirds and Second Homes

*Taking your number south for the winter.*

If you spend part of the year in a warmer spot, the newer phone services can actually be handier than the old landline. A VoIP adapter or a cellular base can travel with you — your home number rings wherever you plug the box in and have signal or internet.

There's one important safety note if you do that: your 911 registered address has to match where you actually are, because that's the address emergency services receive. If you move the box to Florida for the winter, update the registered address so a 911 call sends help to the right place. Change it back when you come home.

### WATCH OUT

Never leave a traveling phone box registered to the wrong address. In an emergency, help would be sent hundreds of miles away. Update it every time you relocate the box.

## 27. A Few Plain Words to Know

*The jargon, translated.*

The phone company letters are full of terms that don't mean much to normal people. Here's the short translation so nothing in the mail throws you.

- Copper / POTS — the old traditional landline wiring.
- Fiber — the new glass line; faster and more reliable.
- VoIP / digital voice — your call carried over the internet.
- Porting — moving your phone number to a new provider.
- Registered location — the address your provider sends to 911.
- Battery backup / UPS — a battery that keeps gear alive in an outage.

### TIP

Keep this little list with your guide. When a letter uses one of these words, you'll know exactly what it's talking about.

## 28. Setting Up Voicemail and Caller ID

*The everyday features, on the new service.*

People worry the familiar features will disappear, but they come right along. Voicemail, caller ID, and call waiting are standard on nearly every replacement. The only difference is where you set them up: instead of a code from the old phone company, you'll usually use a simple web page or an app — or just ask them to turn it all on for you.

Some of the newer services add nice touches, like emailing you a voicemail or even typing out the message so you can read it. If you've got hearing trouble, that reading feature is a small blessing. None of it is required, though — you can keep things exactly as simple as you like.

### GOOD TO KNOW

If setting up voicemail on a web page sounds like a headache, it's a two-minute job for me on a visit, and I'll write the steps down so you can change your greeting later.

## 29. The Bottom Line on Timing

*Soon enough to plan, not soon enough to panic.*

So where does all this leave you on timing? Somewhere comfortable. The copper shutdown is real and it's picking up speed, but it's still rolling out gradually, and there's no date stamped on Ohio homes today. The sensible posture is to understand your options now — which you now do — and keep this guide handy for when your carrier's letter arrives.

When that day comes, you'll make a calm, informed choice instead of a panicked one. You'll keep your number, add a backup, protect your 911 and your medical alert, and barely notice the difference at the kitchen phone. That's a good outcome, and it's entirely within reach.

## 30. Fiber Install Day — What to Expect

*If the fix is a technician and a new line.*

If your carrier is moving you to fiber, there's often an install appointment, and knowing what happens takes the mystery out of it. A technician runs a thin fiber line to the house and mounts a small box (sometimes inside, sometimes in the garage or basement). That box needs a power outlet nearby, and it's what your internet and phone will run through.

The appointment usually takes a couple of hours. Be home, clear a path to where your existing equipment is, and have your phone handy so you can test it before the tech leaves. Ask them to confirm your phone number came across and to show you where the battery backup goes.

- Ask the tech to test your home phone and 911 before they leave.
- Ask where the backup battery is and how you'll know when to replace it.
- Point out any medical alert or alarm so the tech knows it's there.

### TIP

If being home for a technician and asking the right questions feels like a lot, I'm glad to be there for the appointment with you and make sure nothing gets missed.

## 31. Other Things Plugged Into the Phone Jack

*Fax machines, answering machines, and dialers.*

Your phone may not be the only thing using that wall jack. A fax machine, a standalone answering machine, a medical alert base, or an alarm panel might all be quietly relying on the old copper. When the line changes, each of those needs a thought.

Most will simply plug into the new phone box instead of the wall and keep working — an answering machine, for instance, usually carries right on. The two that need real attention are the medical alert and the alarm, which we covered, and a fax machine, which may do better moving to an internet fax service. Make a quick list of everything plugged into a phone jack before you switch so nothing's forgotten.

### WATCH OUT

An old answering machine will work, but many new services include free voicemail that's easier to use and even emails you the message. Worth a look before you fuss with the old box.

## 32. If You Live Alone

*Building a little extra safety into the setup.*

If you live by yourself, the phone isn't just a convenience — it's a lifeline, and that deserves a little extra care in how you set things up. The goal is simple: make sure you can always reach help, even in a storm or an outage.

- Choose a service with a battery backup, or a cellular base that has one built in, so the phone survives a power cut.
- Keep a charged cell phone, even a simple one, as your final way to reach 911.
- If you use a medical alert, make sure it's a cellular one that doesn't depend on the phone line, and test it monthly.
- Write your address by the phone — in a panic it's easy to blank, and a helper or guest may need it.

None of this is meant to worry you. It's the opposite — a few small choices now mean you never have to wonder whether the phone will be there when you need it most. This is the kind of setup I'm always glad to put together for someone living on their own.

## 33. What I'd Tell My Own Neighbor

*The short, honest version.*

After 30+ years of professional experience helping folks with exactly this kind of change, here's the plain advice I'd give over the fence. Don't panic — nothing's shutting off tomorrow. Don't sign anything a stranger brings to your door. Find out your own carrier's timeline. And when you do switch, keep your number, add a battery backup, and test your medical alert and alarm.

That's really the whole thing. The technology behind your phone is changing, but your phone can stay just as simple and dependable as it's always been — same number, same handset on the counter, same ringer you can hear from the kitchen. The goal is that you barely notice the difference, except that it's now on a line that'll be supported for years to come.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

If any of this feels like a lot, that's normal. You can hand the whole thing to me — the research, the switch, keeping your number, the backup, and the testing — and I'll handle it in one visit.

**CHEAT SHEET**

## Everyday Cheat Sheet

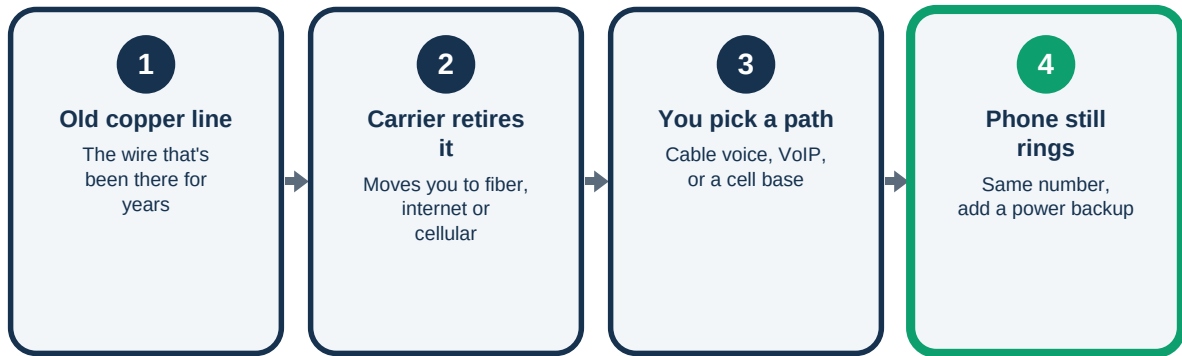
Keep this by the phone. I want to... Do this. Find out if I'm affected — call the company on your phone bill and ask if they're retiring copper on your street. Keep my number — have the NEW provider port it; never cancel the old line first. Keep working in an outage — add a battery backup or choose a cellular base, and keep a charged cell phone. Protect 911 — make sure your address is registered; dial 933 to test if your provider allows it. Protect my medical alert / alarm — call those companies before switching and test after. Avoid scams — no real phone company asks for gift cards or your Social Security number to “keep your line on.” Get help — call Bill: (330) 200-8042.

AT A GLANCE

## A Picture to Follow Along

### What the Copper Shutdown Actually Does

Your dial tone stays — the wires behind it change



A general picture — timing depends on your carrier and street.

## AT A GLANCE

## A Second Look

## Your Four Home-Phone Options

No single “best” — the right one fits your home

|                          | Works in outage? | Needs internet? |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Cable / internet voice   | With battery     | Yes             |
| Home VoIP (Ooma, Vonage) | With battery     | Yes             |
| Cellular home base       | Has battery      | No — cell       |
| Keep copper for now      | Yes              | No              |

Confirm what each provider includes before you switch.

## BEFORE YOU GO

## A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



## HOW I CAN HELP

### Your Visit — and My Promise

**In-home visit — \$99 flat** for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

**Remote Support — \$49** for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

#### GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: [billshometech.com/book](https://billshometech.com/book) · [bill@billshometech.com](mailto:bill@billshometech.com)

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