

Your Home Phone Is Changing: What Mississippians Need to Know About AT&T's Move Away From Copper Lines

If you still have a traditional AT&T landline or DSL internet, a letter may already be on its way. Here's what's happening, what it means for your household, and what to do before your service date.

What's happening

For generations, Mississippi homes have made phone calls over copper wires strung on poles and buried along our roads. AT&T is now retiring that copper network. The company announced in 2024 that it plans to exit copper across most of its service area by the end of 2029, and this year it began discontinuing copper-based service in parts of its footprint.

Two kinds of service are affected:

- **Traditional landline home phone**— the kind that plugs into the wall jack and runs over copper)
- **DSL internet**— the older, slower internet service that runs over phone lines

AT&T says fewer than 2 percent of its eligible customers still use copper-based voice service. But in Mississippi, many of those remaining customers are the people who depend on a landline the most: older residents, rural households with weak cell signal, and families who rely on medical alert or home security systems connected to a phone line.

Not an AT&T customer?

AT&T is not the only phone company in Mississippi. Many rural communities are served by local telephone companies, including:

- Bay Springs Telephone Company
- Bruce Telephone Company
- Calhoun City Telephone Company
- CenturyTel of North Mississippi
- Decatur Telephone Company
- Franklin Telephone Company
- Frontier Communications of Mississippi LLC (acquired by Verizon)
- Fulton Telephone Company
- Georgetown Telephone Company
- Mound Bayou Telephone Company
- Myrtle Telephone Company
- Noxapater Telephone Company
- Sledge Telephone Company / Lakeside Telephone
- Smithville Telephone Company
- Southeast Mississippi Telephone Company

- Windstream Mississippi

If your home phone service comes from one of these local companies, the AT&T announcement does not change your service. **Still, phone networks across the country are modernizing, so read any notice you receive from your own provider carefully, and call the number on your bill if you have questions about your service.**

Why it's happening

AT&T points to the age of the copper network, frequent outages, and copper theft as reasons it can no longer reliably maintain the old system. Mississippi has seen this firsthand. Recent AT&T network notices show copper being retired in Oxford after thieves repeatedly stole cable (including the replacements), in Vicksburg and Pascagoula after copper lines were damaged, and in Natchez, Madison and Vancleave where road projects required lines to be moved. In those areas, customers were moved to fiber rather than having the copper rebuilt.

Will I lose my phone service?

Not if you act. AT&T has stated that no customer will lose access to home phone or 911 service through this transition, but that promise depends on customers upgrading. **If you do nothing, your copper phone or DSL service will be disconnected on the date in your notice and will stop working.**

How you'll be notified

The transition is rolling out in phases over the next several years, area by area. AT&T says customers will be contacted multiple times over roughly a year, by letter, email, text message and phone call, and each notice will include a specific date for when service will end.

Read every notice carefully. Don't assume a letter from AT&T is junk mail. Keep it somewhere you'll see it.

Your replacement options

What's available depends on where you live. Your notice should list the options for your address. They may include:

- **AT&T Phone – Advanced:** a home phone service designed to work like a traditional landline. In many cases you can keep your existing phone number and your existing phone.
- **AT&T Fiber:** high-speed internet over fiber-optic lines, where available.
- **AT&T Internet Air:** home internet delivered over AT&T's wireless network.
- **AT&T Wireless:** a cell phone plan.

You are not required to stay with AT&T. You may also compare service from other local phone, cable, cellular or fiber providers in your area.

Electric cooperative home phone options

In many rural parts of Mississippi, your electric cooperative's fiber internet company may also offer home phone service. These co-op providers do not offer traditional copper landlines. Their phone service is digital voice (sometimes called VoIP) delivered over a fiber connection, similar to AT&T Phone – Advanced. In most cases you can keep your current phone number.

Co-op fiber providers that currently advertise home phone service include:

- **ACE Fiber** (Alcorn County Electric Power Association)
- **CoastConnect** (Coast Electric Power Association)
- **NE SPARC** (North East Mississippi Electric Power Association)
- **TVfiber** (Tallahatchie Valley Electric Power Association)
- **Tombigbee Fiber** (Tombigbee Electric Power Association)

Other co-op providers may offer phone service as well, and availability depends on your address. To find the cooperative fiber provider for your area, visit CoopsConnectMS.com or call your electric cooperative.

Keep in mind: Because co-op phone service is also digital, the same caveats about power outages, battery backup, and medical alert or alarm compatibility apply to it too. Review the checklist below before you switch, no matter which provider you choose.

Before you switch: a checklist

Newer phone services work differently than copper lines, so take a few minutes to think through everything in your home that uses your phone line.

Medical alert devices— If you or a loved one uses a fall-detection pendant, heart monitor or similar device, call the device company and confirm it will work with your new service.

Home security and fire alarms— Many alarm systems dial out over the phone line. Contact your alarm company before your switch date.

Power outages— Traditional copper lines often kept working when the power went out. Newer services usually need electricity. Ask your provider about battery backup, how long it lasts, and what happens during an extended outage. This matters especially during Mississippi's hurricane and severe storm season.

911— Confirm your correct service address is on file so emergency responders can find you.

Other devices— Fax machines, gate or elevator phones, and some older equipment may need to be checked or replaced.

Keep your number— If you want to keep your phone number, say so up front, especially if you are switching to a different company.

Watch out for scams

Any time a utility change makes the news, scammers follow. Because AT&T will be calling and texting customers, be cautious about anyone who pressures you to pay immediately, asks for gift cards, or requests passwords or banking information. If you're unsure whether a call or message is real, hang up and call AT&T using the number printed on your bill.

Help a neighbor

Many of the Mississippians still on copper landlines are older adults who may not read email or texts. If you have a parent, grandparent or neighbor with a traditional home phone, check in with them, help them read their notice, and make sure they understand their date and their options.

Where to get help

- **AT&T:** Call the number on your bill or the number listed in your transition notice. AT&T's overview of the transition is at about.att.com.
- **Federal Communications Commission (FCC):** If you have a problem you can't resolve with your provider, you can file a consumer complaint at fcc.gov/complaints or call 1-888-225-5322.
- **Contact your local telephone provider** if you have questions about your service.