

People usually ask this question at a turning point. A parent does not want a smartphone. A business wants a rock solid backup line for alarms and elevators. A family in a fire zone wants something that works when the power or cell towers fail. The expectation is simple: a corded phone on the wall, a dial tone every time, and no bundled internet or TV.

The reality in California is more complicated, but it is still possible to have a landline without internet, at least in most of the state. The important part is understanding what “landline” means now, who actually provides it, what it costs, and how long it will reasonably be available.

I work with phone and internet setups in homes and small businesses around the state, and I will walk through how this plays out in practice, not just on glossy provider websites.

What “landline without internet” actually means in 2024

When people say “original landline” or ask which companies still offer a landline, they are usually talking about traditional analog phone service. Technicians often call that POTS, short for Plain Old Telephone Service. In the 1980s that came over a dedicated copper pair straight from the central office to your house. No router. No modem. No cable box. Just copper, dial tone, and a monthly bill from the phone company.

Today, there are three very different things that all get marketed as “home phone” in California:

1. True POTS over copper
2. Digital or “fiber” voice from the phone company
3. VoIP style phone from a cable or internet provider

Only the first type is the classic “landline” that works with no internet connection and no power at your house, as long as the phone company’s network is up. The second and third can be sold “without internet” as a separate product, but under the hood they are riding some form of data network, and usually need power in your home to work.

When you call and ask “Can I just have a landline without internet?” the agent may say yes even if what they are selling is digital voice service that will die the second your backup battery runs out during an outage. You have to listen for clues and ask pointed questions.

Short answer: Yes, you usually can, but it depends where you live

Across most of California, you still have at least one way to get a phone line without buying an internet plan. In many places you have two or three choices, but they are not all equal.

Here is the key distinction:

- In many AT&T and Frontier territories, you can still order a standalone home phone line. In some neighborhoods this is still true copper POTS. In others it is delivered over fiber or a digital network but billed as “landline” or “home phone”.
- Cable companies like Spectrum, Cox, and Xfinity also sell “phone only” service in many ZIP codes. They will let you have phone without internet on the bill, but it will not be a true analog line and it will depend heavily on your power and their local network.

In practice, that means a resident in a Los Angeles apartment may have AT&T, Spectrum, and possibly a wireless home phone option, while someone in a rural Sierra foothills community might only have Frontier or a tiny independent carrier.

So yes, landline without internet is still possible. The challenge is choosing the right flavor and being realistic about reliability, especially for emergencies.

Who still offers landline service in California?

If you grew up with “the phone company” being one giant entity, the current landscape feels fragmented. The old phone company in much of the country was AT&T, and after the breakup in the 1980s it became a family of regional “Baby Bells” like Pacific Bell in California. That era is gone, but the service territories are still based on those old maps.

Today, the major telecommunications companies that still offer something you can reasonably call a landline in California are:

1. AT&T California
2. Frontier Communications
3. A cluster of small independent local exchange carriers in specific rural pockets

On top of that, cable providers like Spectrum, Xfinity, and Cox, and some fixed wireless or fiber providers, sell home phone products that look like landlines to the customer, but are technically VoIP.

AT&T California

AT&T is still the biggest legacy phone carrier in the state. If you are in a dense urban or suburban area, there is a good chance AT&T is your incumbent local phone company. They do still offer standalone home phone plans.

In older neighborhoods, you can sometimes still get true copper POTS. In newer fiber-fed areas, AT&T may insist on providing voice over fiber, where your phone plugs into an Optical Network Terminal or a gateway in your home. The bill may simply say “AT&T Home Phone” either way.

The company has made no secret of wanting to phase out copper where regulators allow it, so the availability of old style loops shrinks each year. However, California tends to move more slowly than some other states on full phaseouts, so many existing lines remain in service and repairable, at least for now.

Frontier Communications

Frontier took over many former Verizon landline territories in California, especially in inland and rural regions. Like AT&T, Frontier sells standalone phone service.

In practice, I see a mix of outcomes with Frontier. Some customers still have genuine analog lines with dial tone powered from the central office. Others have phone delivered from a modem or fiber ONT. Frontier reps on the phone do not always know or explain which one you will get, so the best information usually comes from neighbors or local technicians.

Independent rural phone companies

There are still pockets of California served by small carriers that barely register in national rankings. Think of family names you have never heard on TV ads. In some cases, these companies still operate primarily on copper with

traditional switching equipment. In others, they have quietly upgraded to digital cores while keeping the same customer experience.

If you live in a very small town and your bill does not say AT&T or Frontier, you might be dealing with one of these. Many of them are surprisingly committed to keeping dial tone for their communities, even as they roll out fiber. They often know every pole and splice case in their territory because it is the same few technicians who have maintained them since the 1990s.

Landline types and how they behave without internet or power

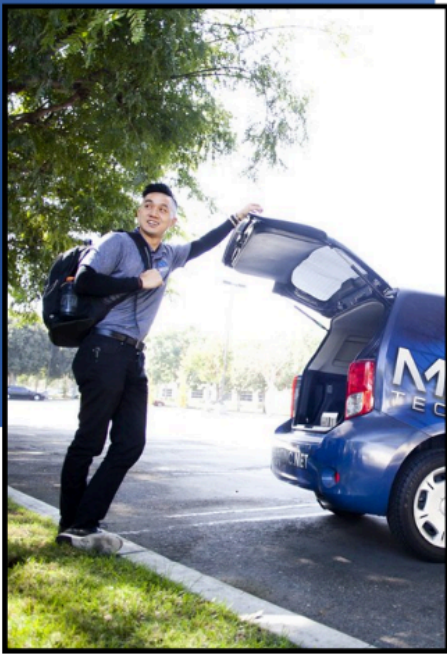
The question “Do landlines still work without internet?” really splits into two separate questions: do they work without an internet subscription, and do they work when your power goes out?

Copper POTS from the phone company central office does not need internet and does not need power at your house. The current that makes your old rotary phone ring comes from batteries and generators at the central office. That is why for decades landlines were the gold standard in earthquakes, fires, and storms.

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Digital or VoIP based lines are different. Here is how the three main types behave.

First, a traditional copper landline. No internet subscription needed, and no power required at your home. As long as the provider’s central office is up and the outside plant is intact, your corded phone will ring.

Second, voice over fiber from the telco. You can sometimes buy it without internet on the bill, but the phone depends on the ONT and backup battery at your location. When your local power and the battery both die, the phone dies, even if the outside network is intact.

Third, cable or VoIP home phone. Providers like Spectrum or Xfinity can sell “phone only” service that does not include an internet plan, but the phone service still moves as IP traffic over their network. Your phone typically connects to a cable modem or gateway. That means it needs your power, and it is vulnerable to any local network outage.

For pure emergency reliability, the hierarchy is clear. Copper POTS wins when it is available and maintained. Fiber voice is a close second if you invest in battery backup and keep it tested. Cable or internet dependent voice is fine for daily use, but I would not trust it as the sole lifeline in a high risk area.

What does it cost to have a landline without internet in California?

The marketing price on websites rarely matches the bill that shows up in the mail. The base monthly rate is only part of the story. Taxes, fees, and surcharges add easily 20 to 40 percent to the advertised price, depending on your county and the type of plan.

For a straightforward residential landline in California in 2024, here is what I typically see on customer bills:

For a basic local calling only line from AT&T or Frontier, expect a base rate roughly in the 25 to 40 dollar range. After taxes and fees, the total often lands between 35 and 55 dollars per month.

For a flat rate or unlimited local and statewide calling plan, the base runs [Phone Systems Company California](#) closer to 35 to 55 dollars. With fees and add ons, it is common to see 50 to 70 [Phone Systems Company California](#) dollars all in.



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Cable company home phone without internet is often promoted at 20 to 30 dollars as an add on to TV, but as a standalone service, the realistic total tends to fall between 30 and 50 dollars per month.

Wireless home phone or fixed wireless voice solutions from cellular carriers can be cheaper, sometimes around 20 to 35 dollars, but coverage and 911 location accuracy vary, and they are sensitive to power and tower issues.

Prices for business phone system lines and PRI trunks are all over the map, so I will set those aside here, but the days when a business PBX could run for peanuts on simple analog lines are largely gone.

If cost is the top priority and you want the cheapest landline phone service without internet, you generally look at three tools: bare bones measured service, state and federal Lifeline discounts, and wireless home phone options in good cellular areas.

Lifeline and special pricing for seniors

Many Californians asking about landline without internet are helping an elderly parent who does not want or cannot handle a smartphone. They also ask what is the best landline service for senior citizens and who is the cheapest landline provider.

California has a Lifeline program that significantly reduces the cost of basic phone service for eligible low income residents. This can apply to traditional landlines, some VoIP lines, and even certain cellular plans. The discount is meaningful. In practice, I have seen some seniors paying under 15 dollars a month, total, for a basic home phone after Lifeline adjustments.

AT&T and Frontier both participate in California Lifeline. Some cable and wireless providers do as well. A senior on Social Security with limited income should almost always be evaluated for this program before deciding a landline is too expensive.

There is no universal "senior discount" landline rate outside of such programs. When people ask "How much is an AT&T landline per month for seniors?" the honest answer is that age alone does not usually change the tariffed rate, but Lifeline can, and it is worth the paperwork.

From a usability standpoint, the simplest landline phone for seniors is usually a basic corded model with large buttons, loud ringer, and no complex menus. Many families buy these separately from electronics stores or online. They work with nearly any landline or VoIP adapter. The easiest phone for an elderly person is not always the one the provider ships in the box.

When reliability matters more than features, I still steer older clients toward copper if it is available, or toward a digital landline backed by a good battery plus a simple handset. Smartphones and apps can come later as optional tools, not as the only lifeline.

How long will landlines last? What about 2027 and phaseouts?

Rumors travel fast, especially around dates. I hear versions of "will I lose my landline in 2027?" from customers who have seen headlines or heard that phone companies plan to shut down copper.

Here is the grounded picture.

The big carriers, especially AT&T, have been lobbying to retire traditional copper POTS networks for years. In many states, regulators have already allowed them to stop accepting new orders in certain areas or to shift customers to digital alternatives as they rebuild their networks. The economic pressure is real. Maintaining miles of old copper for a shrinking number of subscribers is not cheap.

However, turning off a regulated utility service is not as simple as picking a year and flipping a switch. In California, the Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) still treats basic telephone service as an essential utility in many respects.

Providers must seek permission to withdraw certain services, and the CPUC tends to weigh consumer impact, especially for rural residents and vulnerable populations.

Will traditional POTS lines steadily decline over the next decade? Yes. Are they going to vanish statewide on a fixed date like 2027? No, that is not how the process works. Expect a patchwork of outcomes. Some neighborhoods will see copper retired as soon as fiber or wireless alternatives are widely available and regulators sign off. Other pockets may keep their old plant alive longer simply because replacing it is costly or politically sensitive.

If you rely on a landline for life safety, alarms, medical devices, or elevator rescue phones, you should plan now for a world where that line might not be copper forever. That does not mean losing service. It means transitioning to digital or wireless solutions with proper backup power and regular testing.

Options that feel like landlines but are not POTS

Many people only care about three things: a familiar home phone handset, a regular phone number, and predictable monthly cost. Whether the dial tone is “real” POTS or VoIP does not matter as long as it works.

That is why so many landline style offers today are built on voice over IP or mobile networks. They can be sold without an internet plan on your bill, even though they use data in the background.

Cable digital phone, voice bundled with fiber internet but billed separately, and dedicated VoIP services like Vonage or Ooma all fall into this category. So does the home phone box some mobile carriers offer, where you plug your existing phones into a small cellular adapter.

These services often win on price and features. You may get nationwide long distance, voicemail to email, caller ID, and call blocking included in a flat rate that beats a legacy telco tariff. The tradeoff is that the phone now depends on your modem, router, or a small powered adapter. When power fails, the phone fails unless you have your own battery backup system.

For some families, that tradeoff is acceptable. For others, especially in fire zones or regions with frequent Public Safety Power Shutoff events, it is not.

Quick comparison of main “landline without internet” choices in California

To bring the landscape into focus, here is a compact side by side view of the main approaches many Californians use when they want a landline without buying home internet.

1. Traditional copper POTS from AT&T, Frontier, or a small independent carrier

Best for maximum reliability, corded phone power from the phone company, and compatibility with older alarm and fax equipment. Often the most expensive per month, and availability is shrinking.

2. Telco fiber or digital voice without internet on the bill

Often marketed as “home phone over fiber”. Reasonable reliability if paired with good backup power. Requires more gear in the home, and may behave like VoIP for some devices.

3. Cable phone service as a standalone product

Competitive pricing and bundled features. Works well for everyday calls, but depends heavily on your home power and the cable network’s stability.

4. Dedicated VoIP providers that can work over any broadband

Good when you already have internet or when you can host the service at a neighbor's or relative's and extend it. Not truly "without internet", despite how some ads sound.

5. Wireless home phone adapters from mobile carriers

Handy in rural areas with poor copper but decent cellular coverage. Cheaper in many cases, but reliability tracks the cell network and power.

That list covers what most households actually use once they start comparing quotes.

Call features and star codes you still see on landlines

Many of the classic star codes still work on modern landlines and even on some digital and VoIP services. They are small details, but they matter for people used to old habits.

Star 69, sometimes written as *#69, is the classic "call return" code that dials back the last incoming number if the network supports it. On some modern VoIP lines it may be replaced by a menu option, but it is still present on many PSTN based lines.

Star 82, written as *82, typically unblocks your caller ID on a per-call basis if you have line blocking by default. That is useful when you normally keep your number private but need to reveal it to reach someone who rejects anonymous calls.

Star 77, or *77, in many regions turns on anonymous call rejection, blocking calls from numbers that do not provide caller ID. The exact behavior and availability depend on the carrier and plan. On some VoIP lines it is handled through a web portal instead.

These small features are part of the reason some older users prefer a landline. The interface is muscle memory: pick up the handset, dial a star code, get a voice prompt, done. No app hunting, no settings menus.

Practical steps to order a landline without getting upsold into bundles

Ordering a simple, internet free landline from a modern provider can be surprisingly frustrating. Sales scripts are tuned to push bundles and mobile plans. You may need to be very clear and very persistent.

Here is a lean checklist that tends to work when I set up lines for clients.

1. Start by confirming who your incumbent landline carrier is for your specific address using the provider's website or the CPUC service maps, not just a general ZIP code checker.
2. When you call sales, state immediately that you want "a basic home phone line only, no internet and no TV", and repeat that phrase anytime the agent starts describing bundles or promotions.
3. Ask explicitly whether the service is delivered over copper from the central office or through an ONT, gateway, or modem in your home, and whether it will work during a power outage with only a corded phone.
4. Request a written breakdown of the base monthly rate, estimated taxes and fees, and any required equipment charges, and compare that to offers from at least one alternative in your area, such as a cable phone product or wireless home phone.
5. Before the technician leaves, test the line with a plain corded phone at the demarcation point, verify outbound and inbound calls, and confirm any desired features such as caller ID, call waiting, or call blocking codes.

Following those steps reduces surprises. You may still find that the only option at your address is a digital line that needs local power, but at least you will know what you are getting, and you will have a clear cost picture.

When a landline without internet makes sense, and when it does not

A pure landline shines in a few specific scenarios.

It is ideal for a senior who wants a stable, familiar way to reach family and emergency services, especially if they live in a place where power and cell coverage are not completely reliable. It is a strong choice for homes that depend on medical alert systems or alarm panels designed around POTS.

It is also valuable as a backup for certain small businesses. Elevators, security systems, and legacy business phone systems still speak “analog” in many buildings. In those cases, a single landline can be a modest cost for serious peace of mind.

On the other hand, a landline without internet is the wrong place to spend money if the household is already paying for robust mobile service and comfortable with smartphones, or if the budget is tight and Lifeline or bundled discounts on cellular data would deliver more value. Some families keep a landline out of habit even though every member carries a smartphone and no one knows the home number by heart anymore.

When I walk through all of these angles with clients, the decision usually clarifies itself. The key is to separate nostalgia from actual requirements, understand what the local carriers are really offering, and balance cost against reliability and simplicity.



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In California, for now, you still can have a landline without internet. The trick is choosing the right version for your address and planning ahead for the slow but steady shift away from copper so that your lifeline remains a lifeline, not a relic.