



CA Network Modernization: Public Safety FAQ

Will California consumers continue to have access to 911 services?

- No customers are being disconnected.
- Our customers will continue to have access to 911.
- Newer digital voice services have access to 911 and use technology that makes it quicker and easier for customers to reach first responders.

Am I able to call 911 from a wireless phone or VoIP Phone?

- It is important to note that 911 is a mandatory service for wireless and VoIP services.¹
- The FCC's rules require wireless, wireline, and interconnected VOIP service providers **must connect all 911 calls and transmit the caller's location information to 911 call centers.**²
- All wireless phones, even those that are not subscribed to or supported by a specific carrier, can call 911.³
- More important, 911 support for cellphones and online calls has improved because of advancements in phones, GPS technology, carrier services and dispatching equipment. Emergency services now can easily pinpoint VoIP calls, and some wireless calls can be traced to within 150 feet or so of your exact location.⁴

Will Californians be able to call 911 during a natural disaster?

- When disasters strike, the vast majority of Californians rely on mobile phones and IP-networks to access critical information, family, and first responders.
- In 2022, **92% of calls to 911 in California were from modern services** (wireless or VoIP). According to a report from California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), of the more than 26 million 911 calls in 2022, 86% percent of the calls were from wireless devices and 6% were from VoIP phones.⁵
- Fiber-based networks are more resilient to disasters and faster to repair than copper. As long as customers have backup power on their modern phone equipment in the home, they are no more susceptible to outages than on a copper line.
- The belief that copper-based landlines will always work without power is a myth – and gives customers a false sense of security. Network equipment and customers' phones often still need power – copper is not a foolproof connection in a power outage.

Will Californians be able to receive emergency alerts and messages?

- Modern VoIP-based home phones can receive all the same types of home phone-based emergency alerts that traditional copper landlines can receive. There is no difference.
- Californians can receive emergency alerts and messages to their mobile or VoIP phones, email address or via text message.⁶

¹ <https://www.ooma.com/blog/home-phone/911-separate-truth-from-myth/>

² <https://www.fcc.gov/911-reliability>

³ <https://www.911.gov/calling-911/frequently-asked-questions/>

⁴ <https://www.aarp.org/home-family/personal-technology/info-2020/get-rid-of-landline.html>

⁵ CA State 9-1-1 Advisory Board (Nov 2023)

⁶ <https://www.mercurynews.com/2021/07/09/how-to-get-emergency-alerts-about-wildfires/>



- Cell phones can receive Wireless Emergency Alerts broadcast by federal, state, tribal and local authorities, including alerts about extreme weather, disasters, active shooters, and other emergencies in your area; Amber Alerts about possibly abducted children; and more routine public safety alerts.⁷

What are the resiliency requirements for wireless networks in high fire areas?

- We comply with requirements to plan for 72-hours of backup power in the CPUC's Tier 2 and Tier 3 High Fire Threat districts to provide minimum service coverage during grid outages or disasters.

What about location accuracy of 911 calls for wireless and VoIP phones?

- Today, 911 operators can locate you nearly anywhere—from the side of a highway to inside your home—all thanks to decades of innovation in wireless location accuracy technologies.⁸
- The FCC requires that providers of interconnected VoIP telephone services using the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) to meet Enhanced 911 (E911) obligations.

What about backup power for VoIP phones?

- FCC regulations require telephone service providers to offer customers at least one battery option with a minimum standby time of 24 hours.⁹
- AT&T offers a 24-hour battery backup option for AT&T Digital Phone (VoIP).
- For VoIP phones, consumers can buy reliable external backup power systems online, at local electronics stores, or directly from the phone providers from anywhere from 8 to 48 hours. Costs vary for backup batteries for VoIP, but options can be found for around \$40.

Will the 911 system be impacted by the modernization of communications networks?

- California is in the process of migrating to a Next Generation 911 (NG911) System, which will enhance emergency number services to create a faster, more resilient system that allows voice, photos, videos and text messages from the public to the 911 network.
- Advanced emergency communications are not supported by legacy networks and services – that is a critical reason why California needs to move quickly to transition to modern services. California needs a plan to transition customers off legacy services so they can access the NG911 services the state plans to roll out in the coming years.

What are the safety benefits of wireless and VoIP?

- An obvious benefit is that wireless devices are mobile: customers can make and receive calls outside the home and keep their phones with them.
- VoIP has many technological advantages over copper-based traditional landlines. Sound is usually clearer with VoIP.
- Mobile phones are not affected by a home power outage, unlike many cordless landline phones that cannot be used without power. Mobile phones give consumers access to the internet and myriad applications that many rely upon even more than the voice service.

⁷ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-08-18/how-to-sign-up-for-emergency-alerts-and-track-tropical-storms-in-la-county>

⁸ <https://www.ctia.org/news/blog-the-wireless-industrys-commitment-to-9-1-1-location-accuracy>

⁹ https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/tech_transitions_network_upgrades_that_may_affect_your_service.pdf