The questions I hear most from families in California sound like this:

“Can Mom keep a simple landline without internet?”

“Who actually still offers real home phone service?” “Are they going to shut off copper lines in 2027?”

Behind those questions is a real concern: staying reachable in an emergency, without forcing a smartphone on someone who does not want one.

This guide is written from the perspective Phone Systems Company California of someone who has helped many older adults in California set up and keep reliable phone service. We will stay practical, talk about real providers and trade-offs, and flag the areas where the industry is changing quickly.

Why landlines still matter for seniors in California

For many seniors, especially those aging in place, a home phone is not a nostalgic luxury. It is part of their safety net.

Several reasons keep landlines relevant:

First, muscle memory. A number that has stayed the same for 30 or 40 years is burned into neighbors’ and relatives’ minds. In an emergency, that familiarity is priceless.

Second, simplicity. A basic corded phone with large buttons and loud ring is easier to understand than a touchscreen that keeps changing with software updates. For those with arthritis, tremors, low vision, or mild cognitive decline, simplicity is not negotiable.

Third, power and outage behavior. California has wildfire-driven Public Safety Power Shutoffs, winter storms, and sometimes fragile local grids. Traditional copper landlines, where they still exist, tend to keep working in blackouts because they receive power from the telephone company’s central office. Newer “digital” or VoIP home phone lines typically rely on your home’s power and internet connection. With the right battery backup they can be reliable, but they are not quite the same.

Fourth, integration with medical and safety devices. Many medical alert pendants, home alarm systems, and older fax or TTY devices are built to connect to a landline. Some can work over cellular or broadband, but not all.

Because of those realities, the question is not whether landlines are old fashioned. The question is which kind of landline service still makes sense in California and which provider handles seniors’ needs best.

What “landline” really means in 2024

When people ask, “Which company is best for landline phones?” they are usually picturing the old copper pair in the wall. In much of California, that is not what you get when you order “home phone” now.

There are three main types of home phone service:

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

   This is the classic service most people grew up with. It works without internet. A simple corded phone keeps working in a power outage because the voltage comes from the phone company’s central office. Sound quality is usually excellent, latency is low, and it is hard to “hack” in the modern sense. Copper POTS is being retired in many areas, but in parts of California AT&T and Frontier still maintain it under legacy obligations.

2. VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) over cable or fiber.

   This is what Spectrum, Xfinity, and many AT&T “digital phone” customers actually have. The phone plugs into a modem or gateway rather than a wall jack. It can sound as good as or better than POTS, but it absolutely requires power at your home and usually your own broadband internet connection. If you lose power and your backup battery runs out, the phone dies. Some VoIP providers give a dedicated voice line that is not counted as general internet, but technically it is still IP-based.

3. Wireless “home phone” over the mobile network.

   Verizon, T-Mobile, and some prepaid brands sell a box that connects to the cellular network and offers phone jacks for your regular corded or cordless phones. It works like a mobile phone account, sometimes with unlimited nationwide calling. It can be a good option where there is no copper and no cable, but it depends entirely on cellular coverage and power at home, and address-based 911 can be trickier.

All three can be marketed as “landline.” When you compare offers like “What is the cheapest landline phone service without internet?” you have to look past the label and ask exactly which of these three you are getting.

Which companies still offer landline service in California?

The large residential players that still offer some form of home phone in California include:

AT&T California. The historical “oldest phone company in America” is actually the descendant of the old Bell System. AT&T still offers POTS in some locations and IP-based home phone in many others. In the 1980s, what many Californians thought of as “the phone company” was Pacific Bell, a Bell System company that later became part of SBC and then AT&T again.

Frontier Communications. Frontier picked up many Verizon landline territories in California, especially in the Inland Empire and rural areas. Frontier sells both traditional and VoIP home phone, often bundled with DSL or fiber.

Cable companies such as Spectrum (Charter) and Xfinity (Comcast). They primarily offer VoIP home phone as an add-on to internet and TV. Technically you can sometimes have "phone only" without internet, but in practice many sales reps push bundles.

Smaller incumbents and cooperatives. In some rural exchanges you deal with smaller companies such as Consolidated Communications or local telephone co-ops that still maintain copper lines because of federal and state obligations.

Pure VoIP providers like Ooma and Vonage. These are not landline companies in the old sense, but in daily life they act like one as long as your internet is stable. They are attractive when the home already has robust broadband.

Wireless carriers such as Verizon, T-Mobile, and sometimes AT&T offer wireless home phone devices. These are a niche but can be a lifesaver where all wired options are weak.

When you hear older names such as GTE, Pacific Bell, BellSouth, MCI, or Sprint landline, those are "past telephone companies" that have either merged or changed names. They show up in family stories about "the old phone company in the 80s" but you cannot buy new residential copper service from them anymore.

Are landlines being phased out, and what about 2027?

There is a lot of anxiety around questions like "What year will landlines be phased out?" or "Will I lose my landline in 2027?" The honest answer is more nuanced than a single calendar date, especially in California where regulators are involved.

The trend is clear: traditional copper POTS lines are declining every year. Many telephone companies want to retire copper where it is costly to maintain and shift users to VoIP over fiber, cable, or wireless. The Federal Communications Commission has allowed this migration as long as customers have access to "replacement" voice services.

However, in California the Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has to sign off on major changes for "carrier of last resort" obligations. AT&T has formally asked to be relieved of some of these duties in California, and they have discussed eventual retirement of legacy copper. As of late 2024, regulators had not granted a blanket, immediate shutdown of all POTS lines. Any phaseout is likely to be gradual, region by region, with notice periods and some consumer protections.

Practically, this means:

If your senior relative still has a true copper line, it is worth confirming with the provider what their long-term plans are in that specific exchange.

If you are shopping for new service, assume you will be offered VoIP or wireless options first, not copper. Design your setup (battery backups, medical alert compatibility) with that in mind.

You are not going to wake up one day in 2027 to find every landline in California cut off without warning, but the direction of travel is away from copper.

Do landlines still work without internet?

This question connects directly to "Can I just have a landline without internet?"

A genuine copper POTS line works entirely without internet. It even works when your home electricity is out, as long as you plug in a basic corded phone that does not require its own power.

VoIP lines, including most cable company “phone” services and AT&T digital phone, do not work without a powered modem or gateway. They either require your general internet connection or a dedicated voice IP connection. If power goes out, they fail unless you have a battery backup. Backup batteries typically provide from a couple of hours to a full day of standby power, depending on capacity and how much talking happens.

Wireless home phone boxes also need local power, and they use the mobile network instead of the internet. They will not function in a long outage unless you connect them to a backup power source like a UPS or generator.

So the precise answer is: yes, you can still have a landline without internet in parts of California, but you must confirm that you are buying a traditional copper line, not digital phone. In many urban areas, new installs of copper are either discouraged or unavailable, so the realistic option is a VoIP or wireless line with proper backup planning.

Call features seniors actually use: codes like *82, *77, *69

Many seniors are comfortable with simple star codes. When you port a long-standing number to a new provider, those habits matter.

Three common codes still supported by many landline and VoIP systems are:

*82. This code unblocks your caller ID on a per-call basis if you have chosen to block your number by default. A senior who keeps their number private but needs to reach a doctor’s office that blocks anonymous callers can dial *82, then the number.

*77. Often used to activate anonymous call rejection, which blocks incoming calls from callers who hide their caller ID. This can cut down on some nuisance calls, though robocallers adapt quickly.

*69. This is the classic “return call” feature that dials back the last number that called, when supported. It is useful for seniors who forget to write down numbers or have trouble navigating call logs.

Specific behavior and fees vary between companies, so when you sign up, ask for a list of supported star codes and consider printing it in large type for the phone table.

What really matters for seniors choosing a landline

When I help families select service for an older adult in California, I focus less on provider marketing and more on concrete needs.

Sound quality and volume. For those with hearing loss, wideband voice and support for amplified phones can make or break usability. VoIP lines over good broadband often have excellent clarity. However, a poor cable installation or weak Wi-Fi can introduce choppiness.

Reliability in outages. In wildfire-prone or rural areas, this is non-negotiable. If copper POTS is still available and well maintained, it remains the gold standard. If not, a VoIP or wireless line with a real battery backup (not just the tiny default unit) is essential. Some families pair a VoIP home line with a basic charged flip phone for redundancy.

Ease of hardware. The simplest landline phone for seniors is usually a corded or big-button cordless unit with large labels, a bright visual ringer, and an obvious voicemail indicator. Brands like Panasonic, VTech, AT&T’s own home phones, and specialty amplified phones cater to this. For many cognitively fragile elders, fewer buttons and no

voicemail menu are better. In those cases, ring-no-answer that forwards to a family member's mobile after a set number of rings can work well.

Integration with medical or safety devices. If a medical alert system, alarm panel, or older TTY is involved, test it end to end on the chosen line. Some older gear does not play nicely with VoIP or wireless home phone. Many medical alert providers now offer cellular-based units precisely to avoid landline compatibility issues.

Scam and robocall resistance. Landlines, especially long-held numbers, attract junk calls. Call blocking services, either from the provider or built into the handset, reduce exposure. However, be careful with aggressive filters that may block unknown but legitimate callers such as clinics or social workers.

Cost and contracts. Seniors on fixed incomes feel every fee. Watch for "promotional" packages that spike after 12 months, mandatory bundles, and equipment rental charges.

Quick comparison: best landline options for seniors in California

Here is a practical, experience-based snapshot of what tends to work best in different situations. (Availability varies by address, so always verify for the specific home.)

1. AT&T traditional landline (POTS), where still available

   If the address is in an area where AT&T still offers real copper POTS and keeps the plant in decent shape, this is often the most reliable choice. It works without internet, survives outages better, and supports most legacy devices. It is not the cheapest on paper, but with California LifeLine discounts, low-income seniors can bring the monthly cost down significantly.

2. Frontier home phone in Frontier wireline territory

In areas where Frontier inherited Verizon landlines, the experience is mixed, but when the local plant is well maintained, Frontier's traditional or digital voice works fine. Their bundles with fiber internet can offer strong call quality. For seniors, the key is insisting on a simple plan without confusing add-ons.

3. Spectrum or Xfinity digital home phone bundled with internet

   For urban and suburban seniors who already need internet for family video calls, streaming, or telehealth, a cable VoIP line can be cost-effective. The home phone portion itself is often quite cheap within a bundle. The catch is dependence on the cable modem and power, so invest in a UPS battery and confirm 911 address registration.

4. Wireless home phone from Verizon or T-Mobile in good-coverage areas

   For rural spots where copper is terrible and cable does not exist, a wireless home phone base can be the most stable option. It gives a familiar dial-tone experience without requiring a smartphone. Before committing, test signal strength indoors, especially in the room where the base will sit.

5. Pure VoIP providers like Ooma on a stable fiber or cable connection

   When a senior (or family members) already pay for high-quality home internet, a VoIP adapter from companies such as Ooma can deliver inexpensive, feature-rich home phone service. This is often the answer to "What is the cheapest landline phone service without internet?" once you accept that the internet bill exists separately. Again, battery backup and 911 registration need careful attention.

Cost: who is actually the cheapest landline provider?

Rates move constantly, but you can think in ranges rather than exact numbers.

Traditional POTS from AT&T or Frontier without any discounts in California often lands somewhere around the 40 to 70 dollar per month range with taxes and fees, depending on calling area and options. That feels high for a "simple phone," but part of that covers the cost of maintaining old outside plant.

California LifeLine is the big equalizer. Eligible low-income seniors can receive substantial discounts on phone service. With LifeLine, some basic landline or wireless plans drop into the roughly 10 to 20 dollar effective monthly cost band. Not every plan or provider participates the same way, so check the CPUC's California LifeLine website or call for current approved offers.

Cable company VoIP phone, when bundled with internet and possibly TV, may add as little as 10 to 20 dollars on top of a package. On paper, that can make Spectrum or Xfinity look like the "cheapest" landline option. Separately, though, the internet and TV piece might be far more than a senior actually needs.

Pure VoIP like Ooma can charge low monthly regulatory fees after an upfront device purchase, making them appear like the cheapest ongoing option. But again, they ride on an existing broadband connection that costs real money.

Wireless home phone devices typically price like mobile plans, often with unlimited nationwide calling. For a senior in a good coverage area who does not need home internet, this can be legitimately cheaper and simpler than any wired option.

If the specific question is "How much is an AT&T landline per month for seniors?" the candid answer is: enough that you must check the current local tariff, plus whether the senior qualifies for LifeLine or any other discount. Marketing brochures and even call center quotes sometimes gloss over taxes and surcharges, so ask explicitly for the "all-in" monthly estimate.

How to choose and set up the right landline for a senior in California

To cut through the noise, treat the project as a small step-by-step process instead of jumping at the first advertisement.

1. Map the options at the address

   Use AT&T, Frontier, Spectrum, and Xfinity online availability tools, then verify with a quick call. Ask specifically whether traditional copper landline is available or only digital / VoIP.

2. Decide whether the home actually needs internet

   If the senior refuses computers and streaming, a wireless home phone or POTS line might be simpler. If family insists on video calls and telehealth, budget for stable broadband and treat phone as a small add-on.

3. Check California LifeLine eligibility

   If the senior is low income or receives certain benefits, the LifeLine discount can completely change which provider is cheapest.

4. Match the phone hardware to the person, not the brochure

   Choose a big-button, loud-ringer phone if there are vision or hearing issues. For those with memory problems, single-button photo dialers can be transformative.

5. Plan for failure modes

   Assume there will be outages. If the primary line is VoIP or wireless, add a UPS battery and consider a basic mobile phone in a drawer for true emergencies.

This small amount of upfront planning often saves many hours and dollars of frustration later.

Special notes on safety and privacy

Many families ask about hacking and privacy when choosing phone systems, especially after hearing about smartphone vulnerabilities.

A traditional copper landline, paired with a basic corded phone, is still one of the least “hackable” everyday communications tools. It has no operating system to compromise, no apps to install, and no Wi-Fi. The main risks are old fashioned: someone physically tapping the line or social engineering over the phone.

VoIP gateways and wireless home phone bases are modest computers. They are generally secure enough when left with their default firmware and kept on a private home network, but they are not impenetrable. For most seniors, the realistic threat is not high-level hacking. It is phone scams from callers who impersonate the IRS, grandchildren, or bank officials. Training and call blocking matter more than technical hardening.

If the senior also uses a mobile phone, questions like “Which phone is least likely to be Phone Systems Company California Method Technologies hacked?” point toward devices that get regular security updates, such as recent iPhones or well-supported Android models. For someone who barely uses apps, a simple voice-centric phone and strong habits (no clicking links in texts, no sharing codes over the phone) help more than any particular brand.

A brief historical detour: why the old names still matter

Many seniors in California grew up with a very different telecom landscape. In the 1980s, the “big” telephone company in much of the country was AT&T’s Bell System, split into regional “Baby Bells” after the 1984 breakup. In

California, names such as Pacific Bell and GTE ruled local service. Long distance involved separate companies like AT&T Long Lines, MCI, or Sprint.

During the same era, early online services and dial-up providers appeared: CompuServe, Prodigy, and eventually AOL. In the 1990s, dial-up internet companies like EarthLink, NetZero, and local ISPs flourished. Those services used what were essentially landline modem calls to connect to the early internet.

Why does this history matter for a senior landline today? Because many older adults still frame their expectations through those decades: a single regulated phone company, clear tariffs, a sense that "the phone just works, even in a storm." The modern reality of multiple overlapping providers, internet-based voice, promotional pricing, and phased-out copper feels like quicksand by comparison.

When you respect that context and explain options in the language of reliability, dial tone, and backup power rather than jargon, it is easier to find a solution that feels trustworthy.

The bottom line for California seniors and their families

The best landline service for senior citizens in California is not a single brand with a neat logo. It is the specific combination of:

• A provider that actually serves the address reliably,

• A technology type (copper, VoIP, or wireless) whose limitations you understand, • A phone device that matches the senior's abilities, • A pricing structure that makes sense with or without California LifeLine.

If a well-maintained copper POTS line from AT&T or Frontier is still available, many seniors will be happiest and safest with that, especially in outage-prone regions.

Where copper is gone or unreliable, a VoIP or wireless home phone service, properly set up with battery backups and tested 911, can offer clear calls and affordable prices.

The key is to treat the decision as part of the senior's overall safety plan, not as a leftover piece of a TV bundle. When you do that, the "best" landline provider stops being a generic ranking and becomes a well-considered choice that will keep working when it matters most.