

# RATEWATCHER

TELECOM GUIDE

## PHONE DEREGULATION: How Will It Affect You?

*In April 2016 the Maine Legislature made the first significant changes to the laws regulating telephone service since 2012. The compromise legislation allowed for limited deregulation of telephone service in towns where consumers have access to multiple competitive options, while strengthening consumer protections in those areas without alternatives. Many Mainers are confused by these changes and have questioned the potential impact on their landline telephone bill and services.*

The impact of these changes will depend largely on the telephone services you use and where you live. If you have more than basic local telephone service (so called provider of last resort or “POLR” service), and pay for services such as long distance, call-waiting, or caller ID, you should see no change: your service was deregulated in 2012. If the town you live in is served by a company other than FairPoint, the changes will not affect you at all. Regardless of where you live, telephone service is not going away. FairPoint is required to maintain the existing telephone network everywhere it exists now.

The changes primarily affect FairPoint customers taking basic telephone service who live in the 22 towns designated by the Legislature for deregulation. POLR service will be deregulated for residents of Auburn, Bangor, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, Sanford and South Portland as of August 2016. If FairPoint meets certain service quality requirements throughout the rest of the state, then deregulation will be phased in to fifteen more towns over the next eighteen months:

**February 2017:** Cape Elizabeth, Gorham, Kennebunk, Scarborough and Waterville

**August 2017:** Bath, Freeport, Old Orchard Beach, Westbrook and Yarmouth

**February 2018:** Augusta, Brewer, Brunswick, Kittery and Windham

### DEREGULATED TOWNS

As a resident of a town subject to deregulation, again, be assured that your landline telephone is not going anywhere. This law strengthened the ability of the State to ensure that FairPoint does not discontinue service or allow it to degrade, regardless of where a customer lives. Also, current POLR service is grandfathered for one year, meaning that FairPoint must offer the same service and features at the same price for one year after deregulation goes into effect. The primary impact of deregulation is that FairPoint will no longer need approval from the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to adjust the price of basic landline service and the Consumer Assistance Division at the PUC will no longer take formal complaints from customers. However, FairPoint will continue to provide service and there are many alternative options for phone service in these 22 towns. This should allow residents to switch to another provider if they don't like the price or service they receive following deregulation.

There are still consumer protections in place, even after deregulation. While the Consumer Assistance Division at the PUC will not take a formal complaint, they may still be able to help with a specific issue and can be reached at 1-800-452-4699. The Office of the Public Advocate (OPA)

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# UNDERSTANDING YOUR PHONE BILL

## PHONE DEREGULATION:

Two Stories To Tell CONTINUED FROM COVER

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is also available to help resolve your issue. Contacting us at 207-624-3687 ensures that we can advocate for changes and remedies to larger scale issues as they arise. And last but not least, you can file a complaint with the Attorney General's Consumer Information and Mediation Service at 1-800-436-2131.

The Legislature and the PUC will be monitoring the effect of deregulation as it happens. The PUC is required to report back to the Legislature in January of 2018 and January of 2020 on the removal of POLR regulation. This includes reporting on the effect of removing regulation, the status of the landline network, public safety implications, cost of service, and the availability of service. It is important that you inform the PUC and the OPA of complaints if you have them, so that the Legislature and the Commission have a clear understanding of the impact of the recent changes.

### THE REST OF THE STATE

If your town isn't listed above, then the recent changes will have little effect on you, and may even improve service. FairPoint will still have the obligation to serve as provider of last resort, which means that all homes requesting telephone service must receive it. FairPoint is still subject to service quality standards outside of the 22 towns and must report performance to the PUC quarterly. If FairPoint misses its service quality benchmarks for two quarters in a row, the PUC must order the company to improve service or face automatic fines. Previously, enforcement by the PUC was optional.

One additional change for remaining POLR customers is that FairPoint does not need to seek approval for rate increases on basic landline service. It is limited to a 5% increase per year, which is less than \$1 at the current \$18.99 per month rate for POLR.

Finally, problems with your service may still be reported to the Consumer Assistance Division at the PUC or to the Office of the Public Advocate. If you notice a change in the quality of your service or still have questions, please call the Office of the Public Advocate and we will be happy to discuss your concerns with you.

**A typical telephone bill can have more than ten different line item charges for various fees, taxes and funds.**

Many customers find it difficult to understand where these costs come from and what they pay for. Here we describe the line items from a traditional telephone bill. Charges for cable or wireless telephone providers may vary slightly from the list below. This is a complete list of the additional charges, taxes and fees allowed on your telephone bill. If you see a new fee that you do not recognize, please contact the telephone company and our office to verify that it is a legitimate charge.

### FEDERAL

**Federal Excise Tax** - This is a 3% tax assessed by the IRS on local telephone calls.

**Federal Subscriber Line Charge (SLC)** - The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulates this charge, but the money collected goes to the local telephone company to cover costs of maintaining the telephone line between the network and your home. This charge cannot exceed \$6.50.

**Federal Universal Service Fund** - This fund is administered by the FCC and supports telephone and broadband networks in rural and high cost areas. It also ensures that schools, libraries and rural hospitals have reliable broadband. The charge is a percentage of all long distance charges on your monthly bill and the FCC can change the percentage quarterly.

### STATE

**ConnectME Fund** - The Maine Legislature approved this fund to support broadband projects in unserved and underserved areas in Maine. The assessment is 0.25% of the monthly in-state charges.

**Maine School and Library Fund (MTEAF)** - This fund is used to provide schools and libraries with access to telephone service, the internet and technology. This amount is set each year by the Maine PUC and cannot exceed 0.7% of in-state charges.

**Maine Universal Service Fund** - The Maine Legislature established this fund to ensure telephone service is available in rural and high cost areas. It also supports the telecommunications relay service for those with hearing impairment. The current amount charged is 2.1% of all in-state charges and can be adjusted quarterly.

**Service Provider Tax** - This is the Maine sales tax for telecom services. In January 2016, the rate increased to 6% of in-state charges.

**State E-9-1-1 Surcharge** - This fund supports the upgrade and maintenance of the statewide Enhanced 9-1-1 system. The amount charged is set by the State Legislature at \$0.45 per line, per month.

### OTHER

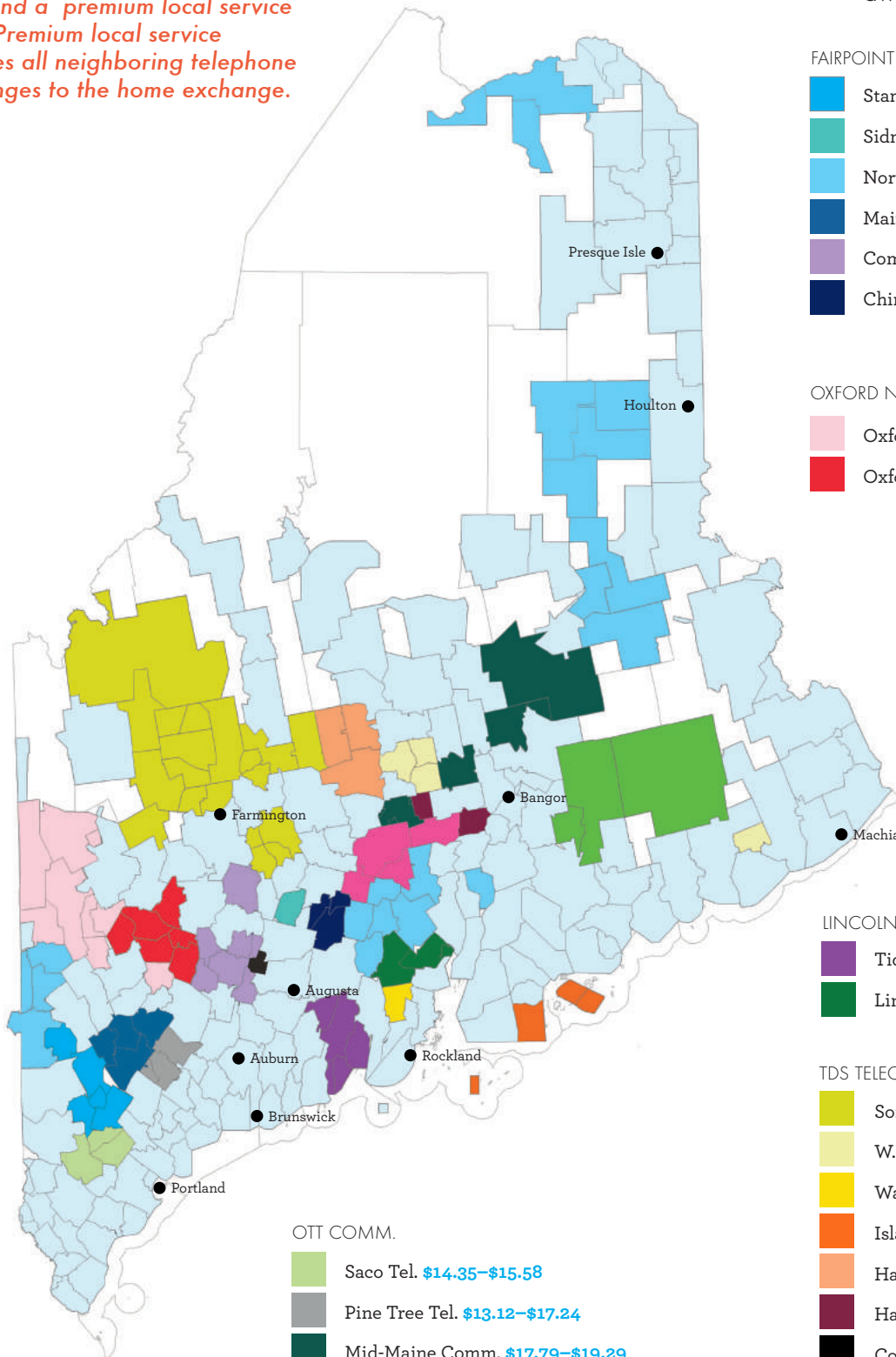
**Federal Access Recovery Charge** - Despite the name, this is not a Federal charge. FairPoint assesses this \$1.99 surcharge to defray the cost of access charges and fees that other phone companies assess on calls outside of FairPoint's service area.

# LOCAL RESIDENTIAL TELEPHONE SERVICE

Prices exclude the Subscriber Line Charge as well as other surcharges and taxes.

Companies that list two prices offer an economy local service area and a premium local service area. Premium local service includes all neighboring telephone exchanges to the home exchange.

Map courtesy of the Maine Public Utilities Commission



- FairPoint NNE \$18.69
  - Pioneer Telephone \$18.99
  - GWI \$21.95
- FAIRPOINT CLASSICS
- Standish \$19.08
  - Sidney \$19.08
  - Northland Tel. \$18.88
  - MaineTel \$19.08
  - Community Service \$18.62
  - China Tel. \$19.08
- OXFORD NETWORKS
- Oxford West \$16.63–\$19.72
  - Oxford County Tel + Tel \$17.17–\$19.72
- Union River \$17.58–\$19.08
  - UniTel \$17.58–\$19.08
- LINCOLNVILLE TEL. CO.
- Tidewater Telecom \$17.79–\$19.29
  - Lincolnvill Networks \$17.17–\$18.29
- TDS TELECOM
- Somerset Tel. \$17.58–\$19.08
  - W. Penobscot Tel. \$17.58–\$19.08
  - Warren Tel. \$17.58–\$19.08
  - Island Tel. \$17.58–\$19.08
  - Hartland & St. Albans \$17.58–\$19.08
  - Hampden Tel. \$17.58–\$19.08
  - Cobbosecontee Tel. \$17.58
- OTT COMM.
- Saco Tel. \$14.35–\$15.58
  - Pine Tree Tel. \$13.12–\$17.24
  - Mid-Maine Comm. \$17.79–\$19.29



## HOW TO USE THESE CHARTS

The charts included in this guide reflect the standard pricing offered at the time of publication and are intended as a reference point for customers. However, prices for the services detailed in this publication change frequently and many providers offer promotional deals to new and existing customers. We strongly recommended that you contact each company directly to confirm pricing to ensure that you are getting the best possible deal.

## TRADITIONAL TELEPHONE SERVICE

As you can see from the many charts and tables in this guide, there are a lot of communication choices these days. Still, many Maine households continue to rely on plain old telephone service, which typically consists of basic phone service at a home or business with unlimited local calling, and long-distance service that may be purchased as part of a bundle or as a separate service – even from a second phone company. These traditional phone services use copper wires owned by your local telephone company, which conduct electrical current to support the service even during most electrical power outages.

The charts in this section show a sampling of the many local and long-distance options available for those who want traditional telephone service. These companies were chosen because they have the lowest prices we’ve found, or because they are widely marketed in Maine. The prices should be compared to the offerings of your local telephone company shown on the included map.

## COMPARE TELEPHONE SERVICE OPTIONS

■ All providers offer feature      ▲ Some providers offer feature      ● None of the providers offer feature

FEATURE	LANDLINE	WIRELESS	CABLE	VOIP
911	■	■	■	▲
E911	■	▲	■	▲
Service continues in power outage?	■	■	▲	▲
Service contract required	▲	▲	■	▲
White page listing	■	●	■	●
Support for vision/hearing impaired	■	■	■	■
Lifeline service	■	▲	●	●
Keep your old number with new service	■	▲	■	▲
Unlimited long distance plans available	▲	■	■	■
Unlimited local plans available	■	■	■	■
Caller ID, Voicemail, Call-waiting and other features	■	■	■	■
Use while traveling	●	■	●	■
Internet connection required	●	●	●	■
Service quality overseen by the Maine Public Utilities Commission	▲	●	●	●

NOTE: In the event of a power outage, telephone services provided by wireless, cable and VOIP companies are accessible while the unit batteries maintain a charge, often from 2–24 hours.

# ROBOCALLS: HELP IS ON THE WAY

According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the complaints they hear most often from consumers are about robocalls and calls from telemarketers. The Do Not Call List is still in effect, but more and more marketers and scammers are using technology to work around this list. The FCC and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recently held a competition called the FTC Robocall Challenge to find new technologies to fight robocalls.

One of the challenge winners was a free service called Nomorobo. Nomorobo intercepts all calls on the first ring and then compares the caller's phone number to an evolving list of known robocall numbers. Those being called still hear the first ring. If Nomorobo determines the call is legitimate, then the phone continues to ring normally. Any robocalls are blocked. This service is currently only available for cable telephone and VOIP, though the company is currently running a trial on mobile phones. To learn more about Nomorobo, including installation, visit [nomorobo.com](http://nomorobo.com)

While new technologies may hold promise, the FCC continues to explore rule changes that could give consumers more tools to fight robocalls. Currently, some telephone companies do offer call blocking. Contact your provider to see if they offer this service and if it is provided at a cost. Look to future Ratewatchers for updates.

## STANDALONE LONG-DISTANCE SERVICE

COMPANY	PIONEER		OPEX		FAIRPOINT		ONESUITE.COM
	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate	Interstate
Per minute rate with 6-second billing	3.5¢	3.3¢	2.1–4.9¢	2.5–4.5¢	—	—	—
Per minute rate with full minute billing	2.9¢	2.7¢	—	—	5¢	5¢	2.5¢
Monthly Fee	\$1.99*		\$2.00*		\$6.00		None
Available in non-FairPoint areas?	Yes		Yes, but rates vary by location		No		Yes
Hawaii/Alaska/Virgin Islands	6.9¢		Not available		5¢		4¢–5.2¢
Calling to Canada	3.9¢		9.97¢		\$1.04*		1.9¢
Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *\$1.99 fee waived w/ online billing or usage over \$20</li> <li>• Monthly fee waived if no long distance is used</li> <li>• 1.9¢ /min. to call other Pioneer customers</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *\$2.00 fee waived for usage over \$20</li> <li>• 3.99/mo. International Plan provides lower international rates</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *\$6/mo. for World Select City Plan for lower international rates</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mins. can be purchased on a calling card and expire 6 mos. from activation, last recharge, or usage</li> <li>• Voicemail via email attachment</li> </ul>

**6 SECOND BILLING** – billed for every 6 seconds the call lasts. For a 2 minute and 1 second call, you would get billed for 2 minutes and 6 seconds instead of rounding up to 3 minutes. With 6 second billing, you can save an average of 10% per call based upon the call length over full minute billing.



# BUNDLING: WHEN DOES IT MAKE SENSE?

*Telephone bills, long distance plans, and internet can be a large part of your monthly budget, so it's important to find ways to get the services you need at the most affordable rate.*

Many local telephone providers offer bundled plans that allow you to combine some or all of these services at a discounted rate. If you have a large long distance bill each month, it would be worth looking into the unlimited local and long distance plans shown on the Bundled Plans chart on page 9. Several of the companies listed allow you to further customize your plan by choosing between nationwide long distance or in-state long distance. On the other hand, if you rarely make long distance calls then it would be more cost effective to stay with a standalone long distance plan where you only pay for the minutes you use.

Many companies now offer to bundle telephone and internet services. Internet services can vary widely in their prices and in promotional offerings, but bundled plans are often much cheaper than subscribing to each service individually. If you are going to sign up for internet service through your telephone provider, it makes sense to ask about the bundled plan and contract length, if applicable. If you live in an area with several internet service providers it would be worth calling a few companies to compare their internet speeds and prices for your home before committing to a bundled plan. To test the bundle price, it often pays to ask each company its price for each individual service outside of a bundle, and then consider whether you need all of the services included. Bundle prices can be negotiated. Customers can sometimes ask for—and get—a lower rate from their provider.







## DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE PRICES ON THE RISE

Calling directory assistance to find a phone number for a long lost friend or a business used to be an affordable and reliable way to get connected. However, the prices for these services have been increasing and in February they took another big jump for FairPoint Communications customers. The cost of directory assistance from FairPoint is now \$5 per call. The price to have directory assistance

complete the call has increased as well, from \$1.01 to \$2.25. If you have access to the internet at home, you can save the call to directory assistance by searching the internet for the telephone number. For those without home internet access, you can use the computers at your local library to perform a search for the telephone number.

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## MISS YOUR WHITE PAGES? HERE'S HOW TO GET IT.

Beginning in 2015, phone books printed and distributed by FairPoint Communications no longer include residential listings. The information will still be free and available for those who want it. As new phone directories are published, the white pages will post online at [dexpages.com](http://dexpages.com). For example, when the printed Portland business directory is published in August, the Portland residential listings will be made available online at that time. Printed copies of the Residential White Pages listings are still available upon request. To order a free copy, call DexPages at 1-877-243-8339

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## USING THE PHONE IN A POWER OUTAGE

New technologies have given consumers more options for telephone service but some of these technologies require consumers to take extra steps to be sure your phone will work during a power outage. Being informed and prepared can prevent a lot of stress when an emergency arises, and even save a life.

Traditional phone service provided over the copper wire network has battery back-up power installed across the system, providing continuous power to each customer's phone through the copper lines in the event of a power outage. As a result, customers using the traditional phone system may still be able to make and receive calls even if their power is out. This, of course, only works if you have a standard non-cordless telephone, as cordless handsets require electricity to function.

Cable, VOIP and wireless phone systems don't have the same system-wide battery back-up in the event of a power outage. Instead, they rely on individual batteries in customers' homes or devices. Cell phones will continue to work in a power outage until their batteries run down. This can be up

to 36 hours of standby time, or up to 8 hours of talk time depending on the phone. The majority of cable providers in Maine do not automatically provide a battery back-up during installation, but they are available for purchase. Some VOIP services are also able to run off of a battery back-up system.

For these systems, making sure that you have phone service during a power outage may require more preparation. To be prepared for a power outage, you should know if your phone system is equipped with a battery backup, where that battery is located, and if you need to turn this back-up on in the event of a power outage. You should also test the back-up system regularly during fair weather, so that you can contact your provider if it's not working. If the outage could last for several days, consider disconnecting the battery back-up when you do not need to make or receive calls. This will preserve the battery life and help ensure that you can contact emergency personnel if needed. You may want to keep spare batteries on hand, particularly if there are medical devices in the home that require a telephone line in order to operate properly.



# LIFELINE DISCOUNTS FOR LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS

Lifeline is a federal program that provides eligible Maine residents up to a \$13.50 per month discount on phone service. The discount can be applied to landline telephone service or cell phone service, but only one discount is available per address.

To qualify for these services, you must receive assistance from one of the following programs:

- MaineCare
- Medicaid
- Food Stamps
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- The National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program

Residents of Native American Indian tribal communities qualify for enhanced Lifeline support if they qualify for any of the programs listed above or for certain tribal assistance programs.

Participants must recertify every year to show that they are still eligible to receive Lifeline benefits. To apply for these services, please contact your local phone company or the providers shown on the Wireless Lifeline Phone Providers chart. For additional information, please contact your local Community Action Program (CAP) or call 211. If you are over 60 or have a disability, contact the Aging and Disability Resource Centers or local Agencies on Aging at 877-353-3771.

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## WIRELESS LIFELINE PHONE PROVIDERS

- All programs offer a free phone upon verification of eligibility.
- All providers offer service across Maine, but internet quality is tied to the signal strength in your area.

Company	Free Minutes Per Month	Free Text Per Month
Assurance Wireless	350	Unlimited
Budget Mobile Lifeline	350	350
Clintex	500	1 min. per text message
Life Wireless	500	1/3 min. per text message
Qlink	250	1/8 min. per text message
Safelink Wireless	350	Unlimited
Tag Mobile	500	Unlimited





## BUNDLED PLANS: LOCAL, LONG-DISTANCE, & BROADBAND INTERNET

All plans include unlimited calling to US and Canada. All plans include voicemail, call waiting and Caller ID features. Additional Plans available.

Service over cable or internet     Service over Phone Network with built-in battery back-up

Company	Unlimited Local & Nationwide Long Distance	Unlimited Local & Instate Long Distance	DSL & Unlimited Local and Nationwide Long Distance	Location Served
Charter, formerly Time Warner Cable <sup>1</sup>	\$39.95	\$29.95	N/A	All 16 Counties
Comcast	\$44.95	\$34.95	\$39.95	York, Cumberland, Sagadahoc
FairPoint	\$48.99	\$36.29	30% off voice and 10% off internet	All 16 Counties
GWI	\$45.95	\$35.95	From \$41.45 7Mbps .05 per min. to \$69.95 20Mb Unlimited LD	All 16 Counties
Lincolnton Networks, Inc.	\$58.24	\$38.24	From \$79.95 to \$239.95 - 768/768Kbps to 50/50Mbps	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo
MaineStream Internet (formerly Cornerstone)	\$39.95	N/A	\$77.95 DSL: Up to 20Mbps/2Mbps + Phone  \$82.95 Fiber-To-The-Home: 20Mbps/20Mbps + Phone	Penobscot, Piscataquis
MetroCast Communications	\$44.95	N/A	\$88.90	York
OTT Communications	\$38.45	\$29.95	\$50.45 - \$79.95 4Mbps to 40Mbps	Cumberland, Hancock, Penobscot, York
Oxford Telephone	\$50 (\$43 without features)	N/A	\$81 Up to 5Mbps	Androscoggin, Oxford
Premium Choice Broadband <sup>2</sup>	\$24.95	\$24.95	From \$59.90 (1.5Mbps) to \$99.90 (5Mbps)	Piscataquis
Tidewater Telecom, Inc.	\$59.24	\$39.24	From \$79.95 to \$239.95 - 768/768Kbps to 50/50Mbps	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo
Unitel	\$44.99	\$34.99	\$83.99 up to 6Mbps	Parts of Waldo, Kennebec, Penobscot

### NOTES:

- 1) Optional Battery Backup are also available, each for an additional fee.
- 2) Bundled plans with all internet options except for 4G Cellular Service (DSL, Cable and Wireless) and VOIP phone service

# THE BASICS OF VOIP

*Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) is a general term used to describe several options for making phone calls over the internet.*

Historically, phone calls were transmitted through powered copper lines with a battery back-up that allowed them to continue to function during a power outage. Instead of using this dedicated circuit switched telephone network to transmit calls, VOIP sends the call through your internet connection. As more and more consumers choose VOIP as an alternative to traditional phone service, we now include the VOIP service offered by cable providers on the bundled plans chart. Customers should be aware that unlike traditional telephone service, phone service provided by a cable company does not offer a powered line, so you will lose service during a power failure.

The charts in this section describe both computer-based VOIP services and services that require a phone adapter.

## COMPUTER-BASED VOIP SERVICE

At their most basic, computer-based VOIP services allow you to make and receive phone calls via your computer. Many of these services offer apps that can be used with your cell phone or tablet in addition to online services. The majority of computer-based providers include free calls to other customers using the same service. In the last few years, many monthly subscription plans have grown to include unlimited calls to US and Canada. Some computer-based services now offer customers the ability to decide what phone should ring if someone calls you, enabling service away from the computer screen. However, it is important to note that many of these services are not fully compatible with the 911 system.

## PHONE ADAPTER VOIP SERVICES

These VOIP services use an adapter to connect a regular telephone directly to your internet router or your computer's USB port. Using this adapter, you can make calls from your phone number from anywhere with an internet connection. Several of the providers listed on the VOIP chart include the adapter at no additional cost.

In choosing between these services, the devil is in the details. All of these services require you to have an internet connection available at the location of service, be it at home or while traveling. To best compare the service and costs, you should know what states and countries you are likely to call frequently and have a list of the services you want to include with your subscription when contacting the company for more information.

## GETTING STARTED

All VOIP services require a reliable, high-speed internet connection and depending on the service you chose, you may need a computer or a telephone with an appropriate adapter. However, the person you are calling does not need any special equipment; the recipient just needs a telephone (or cell phone) with which to answer the call. Your phone service is only as reliable as your internet connection, so to ensure that calling 911 works in an emergency, verify that the provider offers Enhanced 911 (E911) service to all customers and keep your address updated with the VOIP provider. Once you have decided which service best fits your needs, you can contact the providers using the directory at the back of this guide.

## COMPUTER BASED SERVICES

- Requires either a computer microphone, speakers or a headset.
- Compatible with cell phones.
- No contract required.

COMPANY	FREE TO USERS OF SAME PROVIDER	PRICE	NOTES
Skype	✓	\$2.99/mo. Unlimited calls to U.S. & Canada \$13.99/mo. Unlimited World -plan includes unlimited calls to over 60 countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automatic refill plans are available including monthly, quarterly or yearly subscriptions</li> </ul>
Google Voice	✓	Free from U.S. & Canada 1¢ from everywhere else	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep your phone number or pick a new telephone number</li> <li>• You decide which of your phones ring when that number is dialed</li> <li>• Transcribes voicemail to email</li> </ul>
Onesuite	✓	\$2.95/mo. SuiteAdvantage 1.3¢/min. for U.S. & Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unlimited incoming calls</li> <li>• Choose your own area code so family &amp; friends can call your Onesuite number at local rates</li> <li>• Keep your phone number</li> <li>• Free voicemail</li> </ul>

## PHONE ADAPTER REQUIRED

- Keep your regular house phone and use an adapter to connect to the internet.
- Use an internet-ready phone.
- Unlimited calls to the US.
- Caller ID, voicemail and call waiting included for free.

COMPANY	FREE TO USERS OF SAME PROVIDER	PRICE	NOTES
Ooma		\$17.99/mo. unlimited minutes to 61 countries - World Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No monthly fees or contracts</li> <li>• \$40 to keep your phone number</li> <li>• Initial cost for Ooma device begins at \$119</li> </ul>
Vonage	✓	\$10/mo. for the first year with 1 year agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No activation fee with 1 year agreement</li> <li>• Telephone adapter included</li> <li>• 1 year agreement required</li> </ul>
Basic Talk		\$10/mo.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone adapter included</li> <li>• Keep your current number</li> <li>• Contract is on a month-to-month basis</li> <li>• No activation fee</li> </ul>
MagicJack	✓	\$40/12 mo. plan includes MagicJack GO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone adapter included</li> <li>• \$10 to keep your phone number</li> </ul>

# DECIDING WHICH INTERNET OPTION IS RIGHT FOR YOU

The Broadband Internet Service Providers chart lists providers by technology and county in which they serve. As you can see, there are many different providers using many different technologies to provide broadband internet access. Today in Maine, you can access the internet across your telephone lines (DSL), through the cable network, fiber optic cable, or a variety of wireless options. Understanding the differences between these technologies is an important part of choosing a broadband provider.

## DSL

Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), which is delivered using the existing copper telephone network, is the most widely available internet access technology in Maine today. Download speeds range from 1.5 Mbps to 25 Mbps. Internet access through a DSL connection rarely comes with a data cap, allowing you to stream videos or browse the internet without worrying about overage charges. However, the speed of your connection is dependent on how far you live from the nearest terminal on the telephone company's network. To find out the speed offered at your specific address, you will need to call the provider and ask them for the upload and download speeds available at your home.

## CABLE

If you already have access to cable TV at your home, then you are likely able to receive internet from your cable provider as well. In general, cable provides faster download speeds than DSL. Download speeds with cable range from 3 Mbps to over 100 Mbps. Currently, most cable companies offer access to the internet without data caps. Comcast Xfinity does have a data cap, but increased that limit to 1000 gigabytes in June, a limit not often reached by casual internet users.

## FIBER

For residential customers, fiber optic cable, which uses light waves to transmit its signal provides internet access at the fastest speeds available in Maine, reaching download speeds of up to 1 Gbps. Fiber is not available everywhere, but is growing every year. To find out if fiber is available in your area, please refer to the Fiber section of the Broadband Internet Service Providers chart of this guide.

## SATELLITE

Those living in places without DSL, cable or fiber internet options must rely on wireless technologies for internet access. The most well-known option is provided via satellite. Like satellite TV, customers need to install a dish at their home. Most plans include data caps that limit the amount of data you can use each month without incurring an overage charge. The signal can also fail if bad weather disrupts communication with the satellite. Satellite service provides internet download speeds from 2 Mbps to 15 Mbps.

## WIRELESS

Wireless internet access is growing at a rapid pace across Maine. The wireless options listed on the Broadband Internet Service Provider chart are "fixed": the technology is designed to reach your address and serve your needs at home. As with DSL, this technology is distance dependent. Your home needs to be near a tower or relay point to access the internet with a reliable and fast connection. Wireless download speeds range from 1.5 Mbps to 25 Mbps.

## BROADBAND INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

COMPANY	COUNTIES WITHIN WHICH SERVICE IS PROVIDED	BASIC SPEED OFFERING (DOWNLOAD/UPLOAD)	MONTHLY PRICE	OTHER SPEEDS AVAILABLE FOR THIS SERVICE	CONTRACT LENGTH	INSTALLATION FEE	EQUIPMENT FEE	CANCELLATION FEE
<b>DSL</b>								
Axiom Technologies	Washington	5Mbps/1Mbps	\$39.99	Up to 100Mbps	N/A	\$99	\$5/mo.	N/A
Chebeague.net, LLC	Cumberland	7Mbps/1Mbps	\$39.99	Up to 30Mbps	N/A	\$99	\$5/mo.	N/A
FairPoint	All 16 counties	Up to 15Mbps/1Mbps	\$50.99	Up to 50Mbps/20Mbps	1 year or monthly is available	\$99	\$5.99/mo. Purchase options available rather than lease.	\$79
FairPoint Classics	Oxford, Aroostook, Cumberland, Washington, Piscataquis	Up to 15Mbps/1Mbps	\$60.95	50Mbps/20Mbps	Month to Month	\$49.95	\$59.95	N/A
GWl	All 16 counties	Up to 7Mbps	\$46.95	Up to 20Mbps	N/A	\$50	\$1	\$0
Lincolnvill Networks, Inc.	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo	768Kbps/768Kbps	\$38	Up to 10Mbps/2Mbps	N/A	\$0	\$47	N/A
North Country Broadband	Piscataquis	1.5Mbps/384Kbps	\$44.95	Up to 8Mbps/768kbps	12 mos.	\$100	\$0	\$250
OTT Comm.	Cumberland, Hancock, Penobscot, York	4Mbps/1Mbps	\$38.45	Up to 40Mbps	N/A	\$65	\$10	N/A
Premium Choice Broadband	Hancock	1.5Mbps/384Kbps	\$39.95	Up to 5Mbps/768Kbps	1 or 2 year contracts available	\$49.95 with a 2 year agreement or \$149.95 with a 1 year agreement	\$0	\$199.95 w/2 year agreement or \$99.95 w/1 year agreement
TDS Telecom	Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Penobscot, Somerset	1Mbps/512Kbps	\$28.95	Up to 25Mbps	1Mbps/12 mos. or \$0 for all other speeds	\$0	\$4.95/mo.	\$99
Tidewater Telecom, Inc.	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo	768Kbps/768Kbps	\$38	Up to 10Mbps/2Mbps	N/A	\$0	\$47	N/A
UniTel	Parts of Waldo, Kennebec, Penobscot	4Mbps/1Mbps	\$19.99	Up to 10Mbps/10Mbps, Higher speeds available upon request	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oxford Networks	Oxford, Androscoggin	5Mbps/1Mbps	\$39.95	Up to 24Mbps	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0
MaineStream Internet (formerly Cornerstone)	Penobscot, Piscataquis	3Mbps/.75Mbps	\$47.95	10Mbps/1Mbps, 20Mbps/1.5Mbps	N/A	\$70	\$35 (waived with 1 year contract)	\$0

COMPANY	COUNTIES WITHIN WHICH SERVICE IS PROVIDED	BASIC SPEED OFFERING (DOWNLOAD/UPLOAD)	MONTHLY PRICE	OTHER SPEEDS AVAILABLE FOR THIS SERVICE	CONTRACT LENGTH	INSTALLATION FEE	EQUIPMENT FEE	CANCELLATION FEE
Bee Line Cable	Somerset, Franklin, Penobscot	1Mbps/256Kbps	\$34.95	Up to 10Mbps/1Mbps	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Comcast	York, Sagadahoc, Cumberland	10Mbps/2Mbps	\$49.95	Up to 2Gbps/2Gbps	N/A	\$80	Voice/Data modem - \$10/mo.	N/A
Metrocast Comm.	York	1.5Mbps/384Kbps	\$29.95	Up to 105Mbps/10Mbps	N/A	\$100	\$7	N/A
Premium Choice Broadband	Piscataquis	1.5Mbps/512Kbps	\$29.95	Up to 5Mbps/1.5Mbps	Month to Month	\$49.95	\$0	\$0
Charter, formerly Time Warner Cable	All 16 counties	2Mbps/1Mbps	\$14.99	Up to 50Mbps/5Mbps	None Required	Free self install	None if customer owned modem	\$0
<b>FIBER</b>								
Axiom Technologies	Washington	10Mbps/10Mbps	\$50	Up to 1Gbps	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies
Bluestreak	Parts of Waldo	15Mbps/15Mbps	\$69.95	Up to 100Mbps/100Mbps	N/A	\$200	\$10	N/A
FairPoint	York	75Mbps/35Mbps	\$94.99	Up to 150Mbps/75Mbps	2 years and one year and monthly is also available	\$129.99	\$8.99 - purchase available also	\$149.99
GWI	All but Androscoggin	100Mbps	\$69.95	None	1 year	\$300 minimum	\$0	Remainder of Year
Lincolntonville Comm.	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo	10Mbps/10Mbps	\$68	1Gbps/1Gbps & beyond	N/A	\$0	\$0	N/A
Lincolntonville Networks	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo	10Mbps/10Mbps	\$68	1Gbps/1Gbps & beyond	N/A	\$0	\$0	N/A
North Country Broadband	Piscataquis	5Mbps/5Mbps	\$44.95	Up to 15Mbps/15Mbps	12 mos.	\$199.95	\$0	\$250
OTT Comm.	Cumberland, Penobscot	50Mbps/50Mbps	\$49.99	Up to 150Mbps	N/A	\$75	\$10	N/A
TDS Telecom	Penobscot	1Mbps/512Kbps	\$28.95	Up to 50Mbps	1Mbps/12 mos. or \$0 for all other speeds	\$0	\$4.95/mo.	\$99
Tidewater Telecom	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo	10Mbps/10Mbps	\$68	1Gbps/1Gbps & beyond	N/A	\$0	\$0	N/A
Union River	Portions of Hancock, Washington counties	5Mbps/1Mbps	\$44.95	Up to 30Mbps/25Mbps	6 mos.	\$0	\$0	\$25 if cancelled within the first 6 mos.



COMPANY	COUNTIES WITHIN WHICH SERVICE IS PROVIDED	BASIC SPEED OFFERING (DOWNLOAD/UPLOAD)	MONTHLY PRICE	OTHER SPEEDS AVAILABLE FOR THIS SERVICE	CONTRACT LENGTH	INSTALLATION FEE	EQUIPMENT FEE	CANCELLATION FEE
UniTel	Parts of Waldo, Kennebec, Penobscot	15Mbps/15Mbps	\$69.95	Up to 100Mbps/100Mbps	N/A	\$200	\$10.92	N/A
MaineStream Internet (formerly Cornerstone)	Penobscot, Piscataquis	10Mbps/10Mbps	\$54.95	Up to 50Mbps/50Mbps	1 year	\$149.95	Included in installation fee	80% of remaining contract term
<b>SATELLITE</b>								
Excede	All 16 counties	12Mbps/3Mbps	\$49.99	N/A	24 mos.	\$0	Lease fee \$9.99/mo.	No fee if equipment is returned
HughesNet	All 16 counties	5Mbps/1Mbps	\$29.99	Up to 15Mbps/2Mbps	24 mos.	Up to \$200	Lease fee \$9.99/mo.	Up to \$400
<b>WIRELESS</b>								
Aroostook Technologies Inc	Aroostook	2Mbps/1Mbps	\$39.95	Power Pkg 5Mbps/2Mbps \$69.95 Extreme Pkg 10Mbps/2Mbps \$79.95	12 mos.	\$139	N/A	Balance of Contract
Axiom Technologies	Washington	3Mbps/1Mbps	\$39.99	Up to 20Mbps	12 mos.	\$99	N/A	\$250
Bluestreak	Parts of Waldo	3Mbps/1Mbps	\$34.99	Up to 15Mbps/15Mbps	N/A	\$99.95/fee varies	N/A	N/A
GWI	Hancock, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Cumberland (towns limited)	Up to 5Mbps	\$40	Up to 10Mbps	N/A	\$100	\$65	\$0
North Country Broadband	Piscataquis	1.5Mbps/368Kbps	\$44.95	Up to 5Mbps/768Kbps	12 mos.	\$0 with a 2 year agreement or \$99.95 with 1 year agreement	\$0	\$250
Premium Choice Broadband	Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo	1.5Mbps/384Kbps	\$49.95	Up to 5Mbps/768Kbps	1 or 2 year contract	\$0 with 2 year contract or \$99.95 with 1 year contract	\$0	\$199.95 with 2 year contract or \$99.95 with 1 year contract
Redzone Wireless, LLC	Cumberland, Knox, Kennebec, Androscoggin, Penobscot, Hancock	20Mbps/2Mbps	\$39	Up to 200Mbps/200Mbps	No contract for Residential Plans	\$50	\$0	\$0



## INTERNET ACCESS AT HOME OR ON THE ROAD

Many Maine homes still lack access to broadband internet through traditional means, such as DSL or cable connections. If there is a reliable cell phone signal at your home then a wireless internet hotspot, or wifi hotspot, may be a viable alternative. All major cell phone providers listed on our WiFi Hotspot chart offer these devices. The quality and speed of your internet connection will depend on the strength of the cell signal and whether there is 3G or 4G service coverage. Acting as a wireless modem, the wifi hotspot allows 5 to 10 phones, laptops, tablets and other mobile devices within range to access the internet.

Another advantage to a hotspot is that it is completely mobile, allowing you to take it with you on the road. This can be particularly useful for those who travel regularly and have several devices to connect to the internet. However, most cell phone data plans cap the amount of data you can use each month. You should be aware if your data plan will charge you if you exceed this cap or just decrease the speed at which you can access the internet. Overage charges can add up quickly. Most companies allow you to monitor your data usage through your online account. Many also now offer to text you an alert if you are approaching your data limit. These are important features to helping you keep your costs in check.

## AFFORDABLE COMPUTERS FOR LOW-INCOME MAINERS

If you need a computer for school or work and aren't able to afford one, there are two programs available that might be able to help. Information Technology Exchange (ITE) is a nonprofit in Belfast that runs two programs aimed at getting Mainers the technology they need. To qualify for these programs, individuals must meet certain income requirements and be over the age of 15.

PCs for Maine allows qualified individuals and families to purchase computers at a greatly reduced price. The program also provides technical support and software to recipients. More information is available at [www.pcsformaine.org](http://www.pcsformaine.org)

For those who can't afford to purchase a computer the Get IT, Give IT project may be able to help. ITE runs fundraising campaigns for qualified individuals to help purchase the needed computers. To see if this program is right for you, please visit [www.giveitgetit.itec3.org](http://www.giveitgetit.itec3.org)

For more information, an application or to donate to one of the programs above, please contact ITE at [www.itec3.org](http://www.itec3.org) or 207-338-4233.

## WIFI HOTSPOT CELLULAR INTERNET SERVICE

- All providers offer service across Maine, but internet quality is tied to the wireless signal strength in your area.
- Device costs range from \$0-\$200 depending on the company and on length of contract.
- Most popular data cap plans are listed, but other size plans are available.

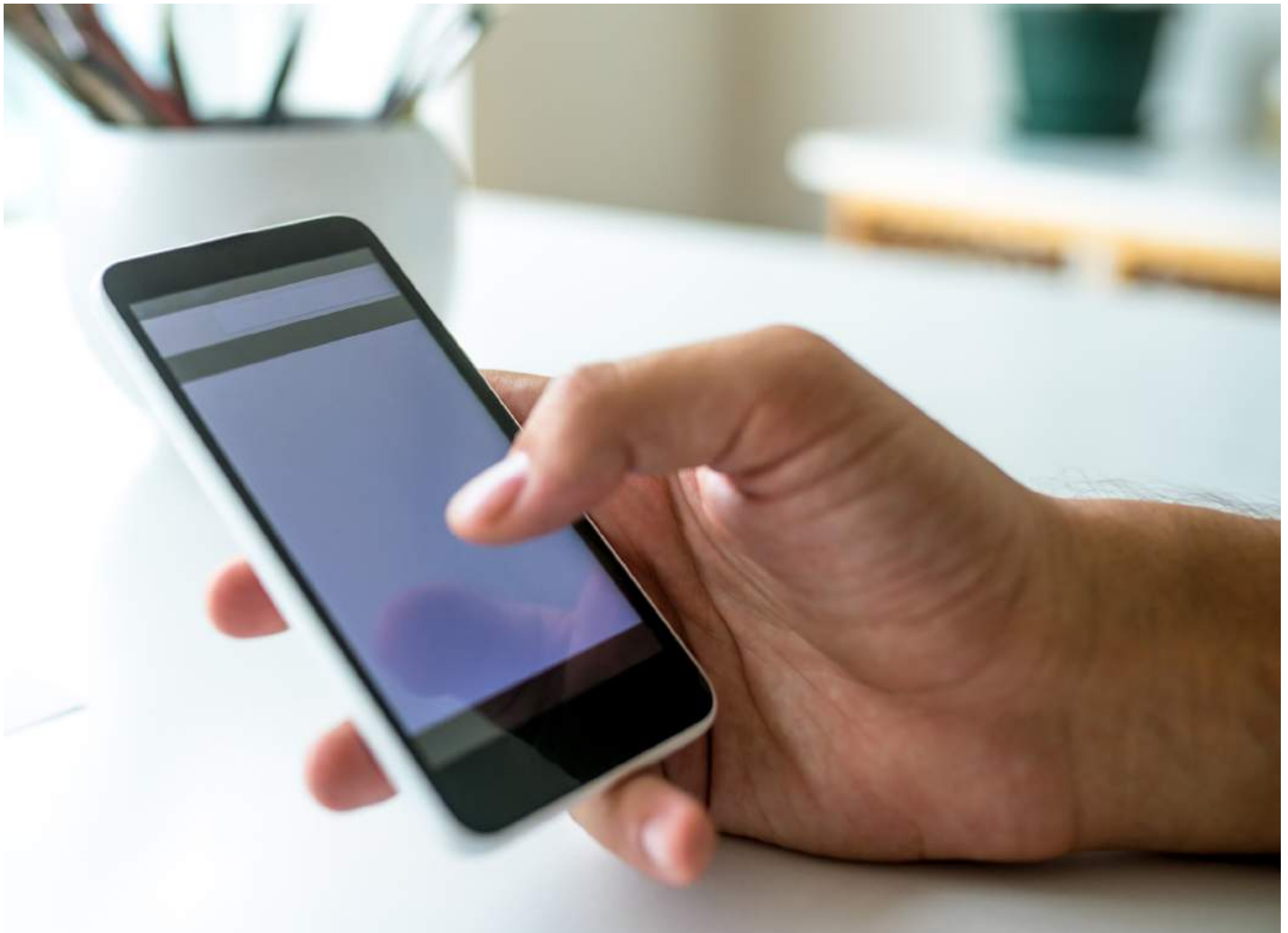
COMPANY	PLAN COST (DATA CAP)	ROLLOVER DATA	OVERAGE CHARGES
AT&T	\$30 (3GB)	No	\$10/GB
Axiom Technologies	\$5/mo. (300MB)   \$335/mo. (50GB) + \$20/mo. device charge	No	No charges, but internet speed decreases
Premium Choice Broadband	\$49.95 (20GB)	No	\$5/GB
Sprint	\$35 (3GB)	No	5¢/MB
T-Mobile	\$35 (6GB)	Yes	No charges, but internet speed decreases
US Cellular	\$30 (4GB) + \$20/mo. device charge	No	\$15/GB
Verizon	\$50 (5GB) + \$20/mo. device charge	No	\$15/GB

## INTERNET SPEEDS EXPLAINED

Typically, broadband providers advertise their services in terms of download and upload speeds. In Maine, broadband offerings for residential customers range from 1.5 megabits per second (Mbps) to 1 gigabit per second (Gbps). In practical terms, download speeds affect how quickly a web page appears, how long it takes to download a photo, or the quality of streaming video you can watch. Upload speeds describe the speed at which you can send information back out (such as by sending an email with an attachment). For example, Netflix recommends a download speed of 3 Mbps to stream movies and TV shows in standard definition and at least 5 Mbps for HD quality video. 1000 Kbps = 1 Mbps, 1000 Mbps = 1 Gbps

## PUBLIC WIFI AT BLAZING SPEEDS

If you don't have an internet connection at home you probably know the places you can connect to the internet for free, like public libraries, McDonald's, coffee shops, and most big box stores. We surveyed the Maine Broadband Coalition to find the fastest public wifi in Maine. The winners may surprise you! The Augusta Civic Center checked in with 50 Mbps download and 32 Mbps upload speeds! Chebeague Island Library boasts an impressive 34 Mbps download and a blazing fast 93 Mbps upload. **Can your local hotspot beat these speeds? We want to hear from you! Send a screen shot of a speed test and the location to [opa@maine.gov](mailto:opa@maine.gov).**





## DECODING CELL PHONE DATA PLANS

*How to choose the plan you need. In short, the first step in selecting a cell phone plan is making sure that the provider has a clear, strong signal in the places you will use the phone most.*

Once you've picked the best network for you, your next task is to choose a plan that will meet your needs without breaking the bank. If you only use your phone for emergencies or routine talking and texting then you probably don't need a data plan with your account, and you might be better off selecting a pay-as-you-go wireless plan from our chart in this section. If you use your cell phone to check email, browse the internet or play games, you will need to buy data, and choosing the best plan can be tricky.

The first thing you'll need to do is find out how much data you use now. Your monthly statement with your current cell phone provider will tell you how much data you use each month, which can help you save some money. Your data plan should be close to your actual usage as the wrong data plan can cost you hundreds of dollars each year in either unused services or data overages. Having a lot of unused data at the end of the month means you are paying for more than you use and perhaps downgrading your plan might better match your needs. On the other hand, using more data than your plan allows means that you will pay overage charges that are often very costly when compared to upgrading your plan. If you are new to smartphones and aren't sure which

data plan to choose, there are a few terms to know. Data plans are discussed in terms of megabytes (MB) and the larger gigabyte (GB), which is 1,000 MB. Checking email, visiting webpages, or downloading new applications are all activities that use data. Streaming an hour of music can use 60 MB of data while watching an hour of standard definition video can use over 600 MB. Sending and receiving 50 emails without attachments uses approximately 1 MB. There are many calculators available online to help you estimate your usage prior to picking your data plan including a simple to use calculator at [www.myrateplan.com/data\\_calculator](http://www.myrateplan.com/data_calculator) This website allows you to enter your specific usage details on a monthly or weekly basis and estimates your data plan needs.

Also most smartphones allow you to use wifi, which can help save on data by using your home internet connection or publically available connections found in most town libraries, fast food restaurants and even grocery stores. To use these connections turn on the wifi option in your phone settings menu. The phone will automatically scan for available connections and you can choose which one to join.

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## PREPARING FOR POWER OUTAGES

More and more people are using a cell phone as their primary means of communication, but unlike a traditional phone line, a cell phone may not continue working if the power goes out once its battery dies. Luckily options for recharging your cell phone are growing rapidly. A car charger gives you a reliable means of charging your cell phone as long as your car is running. There are also many portable charging devices available at your local electronics store, from small USB devices to external battery packs (though some of these may need to be charged in advance). Local sporting goods stores also carry many useful devices, from hand crank chargers to solar powered chargers that can help you be prepared for a longer power outage.



WIRELESS



## WIRELESS-BASED HOME PHONE SERVICE

- Equipment has battery back-up included providing up to 3 hours of talk time and 24-26 hours of stand-by time.
- Services are E911 compatible.
- All plans include voicemail, call waiting, caller ID, call forwarding, and 3 way calling.
- Devices not compatible with fax machines, credit card machines or medical alerts.

COMPANY	COST OF DEVICE	MONTHLY FEE	ACTIVATION FEE	EARLY TERMINATION FEE
U.S. Cellular	1¢ with 2 year contract	\$19.99	\$40	\$150
AT&T Home Phone	Free with 2 year contract	\$20	\$45	\$150
Straight Talk Home Phone	\$49	\$15	\$0	\$0
Verizon Home Phone Connect	Free with 2 year contract	\$20	\$40	\$175



# CONTRACT VS PRE-PAID PLANS

There are three main types of cell phone plans detailed on the charts within the Ratewatcher: pay-as-you-go, pre-paid monthly service, and monthly contract plans. There are reasons to pick each one of these plans that extend beyond the financial differences.

## PAY-AS-YOU GO

This option is inexpensive and works well for people who only use their phones for emergency back-up or who talk less than an hour and a half per month. You purchase minutes in bulk and are only charged for the minutes you use. These plans now allow users to send and receive text messages and are capable of calling internationally, though some providers do require an international calling plan. Be forewarned: pay-as-you-go minutes can expire. Be sure to read the fine print with your provider to be sure you have minutes available when needed.

## PRE-PAID PLANS

Pre-paid plans are a good fit for those trying to keep their budgets in check or avoid a lengthy contract term. These plans now include unlimited calling minutes, unlimited texting and up to 1.5 GB of data. Another advantage is that many companies offering pre-paid plans do not charge overage fees if your data usage exceeds the plan limit; however, the download and upload speed slows dramatically once the data limit has been reached. The phones available on these plans may not have all of the same features available that phones on contract plans have, such as parental controls, so it is worth checking with a sales representative if you are looking for additional features.

## MONTHLY FEE PLANS

These plans make the most sense for heavy cell phone users. There are numerous choices for data plans, upgrade schedules for those interested in having the newest technologies, and family plans for those with multiple cell phone users under the same roof. The phones and plans have many additional features that allow for more parental control options, location tracking and even driving controls. These plans often come with 1 or 2 year contracts and termination fees if the user chooses to break their contract.

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## PRE-PAID MONTHLY UNLIMITED VOICE/TEXT WITH DATA PLAN

- No annual contract.
- No termination fee.
- No overage charge for data but speed decreases to as low as 64 kbps once data limit is reached.
- Additional data plans available from each carrier.

COMPANY	MONTHLY RATE	DATA	ROLLOVER DATA	CALLS TO CANADA
AT&T - Go Phone	\$45	2GB	Yes	\$5 for 250 min.
Net10	\$35	500MB	No	\$10 for 700 min.
Straight Talk - Tracfone	\$45	5GB	No	\$10 for 1000 min.
T-Mobile	\$40	3GB	No	\$5 for unlimited calling
U.S. Cellular	\$45	2GB	No	\$5.99 for unlimited calling
Verizon	\$45	2GB	No	\$10 for 1000 min.
Sprint	\$35	1GB	No	10¢ per min.





# SAVE WITH A FAMILY PLAN

Even with the best research, your data plan will be the most expensive part of a cell phone bill. Another way to keep costs in check is to join a family plan. Companies have loosened the restrictions on these plans and now it is possible for friends, family members and even co-workers to join a plan together. Family plans offer a large pool of data for all plan members to share at 30-50% less per month than individual plans. Additional details on family plans can be found on the Monthly Fee Wireless Plans chart.

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## PAY AS YOU GO WIRELESS PLANS

Customers who use more than 150 minutes per month should consider pre-paid monthly or regular monthly fee cellular plans.

COMPANY	US AIRTIME RATE PER MIN	COST PER TEXT MESSAGE	MINIMUM RECHARGE AMOUNT	EXPIRATION OF REFILL MINUTES	PER MINUTE CALLING RATE TO CANADA
AT&T - Go Phone	25¢	20¢	\$25	30 Days	N/A
T-Mobile	10¢	10¢	\$3	30 Days	N/A
Tracfone	33¢	Up to 1/2 airtime min. per text	\$10	90 Days	International Plan needed
Verizon Wireless	25¢	20¢	\$15	30 Days	N/A

# MONTHLY FEE WIRELESS PLANS

- Activation fees often apply but are sometimes waived upon request when purchasing online.
- Features - plans include Caller ID, Call Waiting, Voicemail, and other advanced features.
- Dial 611 from cellular phones for customer service. 911 emergency calls may work from cell phones even without activation.
- Each carrier offers many other plans. Call and check websites for latest promotions and always verify coverage quality in area of use.
- Additional regulatory fees may be added to monthly bill. Please call the provider to inquire about additional fees.

COMPANY	MONTHLY FEE - PICK ONE	PLAN MINUTES	TEXT MESSAGING	INCLUDED DATA	ADDITIONAL DATA PLANS	OVERAGE CHARGE	COST OF EXTRA LINE	COST OF CALLS TO CANADA (PER MIN.)	TERMINATION FEE	NOTES
AT&T	\$50	Unlimited	Unlimited	5GB	\$20   300MB \$30   2GB \$50   5GB \$100   15GB \$140   20GB \$225   30GB \$300   40GB \$375   50GB	\$20 per 300MB on the 300MB plan, and \$15 per 1GB on all other plans	\$25/mo.   5GB or less \$15/mo.   15GB or more	Unlimited calls and text to Canada included in plan	325 minus \$10 for each mo. of Service Commitment.	Monthly Access Charge will be \$15 - \$40 based on plan
T-Mobile	\$50/mo. (plus taxes, fees, monthly device payment)	Unlimited	Unlimited	2GB	\$65   6GB \$80   10GB \$95   Unlimited	\$0/reduced speed once data limit is hit	\$30	Unlimited calls and text to Canada included in plan	No Early Termination Fee; Remaining balance of phone is due at termination.	No annual service contract and no data overage charges
U.S. Cellular	\$60/\$45 with \$15 retail installment or customer owned equipment discount	Unlimited	Unlimited	1GB		\$15/500MB	N/A	Option 1) 44¢/min. Option 2) \$3.99/mo. and 8¢/min Option 3) \$5.99/mo.	\$350 for customers with smartphones or tablets without retail installment contract	Individual line plan; pricing as of April 15, 2016.
Verizon	\$60	Unlimited	Unlimited	6GB	\$30   1GB \$45   3GB \$60   6GB \$80   12GB \$100   18GB	\$15/1GB	\$20	49¢/min.	\$350 minus \$10 for each mo. up to 24 completed mos.	Additional overage charge of \$15 for each 1GB
Sprint	\$60	Unlimited	Unlimited	12GB	\$20   1GB \$30   3GB \$45   6GB \$60   12GB \$80   24GB \$100   40GB	\$15/1GB	\$20	49¢/min.	\$350	Monthly Access Charge will be an additional \$20/mo. when purchased with Sprint Installments or Lease
Consumer Cellular	\$40	3,500 (25¢/additional min.)	None Included	None Included	Text and Data Plans: \$5 - 1,500 text + 150MB \$10 - 3000 text + 500MB \$20 - Unlimited + 1.5GB \$30 - Unlimited + 3GB	Additional use for web data is 25¢ per MB, for all but the largest plan which is 1.5¢ per MB of data	\$10	20¢/min.	N/A	Referral Program - \$10 Credit 5% Discount for AARP Members • Plans: \$10/mo. - 25¢ min. \$15/mo. - 250 min. \$20/mo. - 750 min. \$30/mo. - 1,500 min. \$50/mo. - Unlimited
Pure TalkUSA	\$45	Unlimited	Unlimited	2.5GB	Unlimited Talk & Text Plus: \$24 200MB Data/200 text \$29 1GB Data/Unlimited text \$35 1.5GB Data Unlimited text	Customers' data will automatically cap once the plan limit is reached. Customers can select to allow overages, and will be automatically billed an additional \$4 for every 100MB of data or 100MMS up to a total 3GB cap	N/A	Varies based on carrier and landline	N/A	Referral Program - \$10 Credit Voice Plans: \$5/mo. - 80 min. \$10/mo. - 300 min. \$15/mo. - 600 min.

COMPANY	MONTHLY FEE - PICK ONE	PLAN MINUTES	TEXT MESSAGING	INCLUDED DATA	ADDITIONAL DATA PLANS	OVERAGE CHARGE	COST OF EXTRA LINE	COST OF CALLS TO CANADA (PER MIN.)	TERMINATION FEE	NOTES
Straight Talk	\$45	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited/ first 5GB is at high speeds then 2GB	N/A	\$0/reduced to 2GB speeds once data limit is hit	N/A	Unlimited International Plan available	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automatic refills or on demand refills</li> <li>• Minutes do not rollover</li> </ul>
Republic Wireless	\$40	Unlimited	Unlimited	2GB	Plans: \$10 unlimited talk & text /no data \$17.50 unlimited talk & text/0.5GB \$25 unlimited talk & text/1GB	\$0/reduced speed once data limit is hit	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add data whenever you need it</li> <li>• Dollar for dollar, refund for the cell data you don't use every month</li> </ul>

# DIRECTORY

- AT&T**  
att.com  
800-888-7600—Wireless  
800-467-4663—Go Phone  
800-331-0500—Home
- Aroostook Technologies**  
Aroostooktechnologies.com  
207-762-9321
- Assurance Wireless**  
Assurancewireless.com  
888-898-4888
- Axiom Technologies**  
axiom-tech.net  
866-708-7998
- Basic Talk**  
basictalk.com  
855-210-2823
- Bee Line Broadband Solutions**  
getbeeline.com  
800-439-4600
- Bluestreak**  
bluestreakme.com  
877-338-9015
- Budget Mobile Lifeline**  
Budgetmobile.com  
888-777-4007
- Charter, formerly Time Warner Cable**  
timewarnercable.com  
800-892-4357
- Chebeague**  
Chebeague.net  
207-846-4850
- Cintex (Liberty Wireless)**  
Cintexwireless.com  
800-826-0337
- Comcast**  
comcast.com  
800-266-2278
- Consumer Cellular**  
consumercellular.com  
888-345-5509
- Excede**  
excede-satellite.com  
844-646-1588
- FairPoint NNE**  
FairPoint Classics  
fairpoint.com  
866-984-2001
- Google Voice**  
Google.com/voice
- GWJ**  
gwi.net  
866-494-2020
- HughesNet**  
hughesnet.com  
888-648-2706
- Life Wireless**  
lifewireless.com  
888-543-3620
- Lincolnville Communications**  
lincolnvillecommunications.net  
207-763-9911
- Lincolnville Networks**  
tidewater.net  
207-763-9911
- Magic Jack**  
magicjack.com  
561-594-2140
- MetroCast Communications**  
metrocast.com  
800-952-1001
- Net 10**  
net10.com  
877-836-3368
- North Country Broadband**  
northcountrybroadband.com  
207-876-4000
- OneSuite**  
onesuite.com  
866-417-8483
- Ooma**  
ooma.com  
866-452-6662
- Opex Long Distance**  
Total-call-international.com  
888-577-7266
- OTT Communications**  
otcommunications.com  
877-643-6246
- Oxford Networks**  
oxfordnetworks.com  
800-520-9911
- Pioneer Broadband**  
pioneerbroadband.net  
866-335-1254
- Pioneer Telephone**  
pioneertelephone.com  
866-329-8700
- Premium Choice Broadband**  
premiumchoicebroadband.com  
888-488-3638
- Qlink**  
qlinkwireless.com  
855-754-6543
- Redzone**  
redzonewireless.com  
207-596-5700
- Safelink Wireless (Tracfone)**  
Safelinkwireless.com  
800-723-3546
- Skype**  
skype.com
- Sprint**  
sprint.com  
888-211-4727
- Straight Talk**  
straighttalk.com  
877-430-2355
- Tag Mobile**  
tagmobile.com  
430-2355
- TDS Telecom**  
Tdstelecom.com  
866-734-0704
- Tidewater Telecom**  
tidewater.net  
207-563-9911
- T-Mobile**  
tmobile.com  
800-866-2453
- Tracfone**  
tracfone.com  
800-867-7183
- US Cellular**  
uscellular.com  
888-944-9400
- Union River**  
rivah.net  
207-584-9911
- UniTel**  
unitelme.com  
207-948-3900
- Verizon**  
verizonwireless.com  
866-704-7172—Wireless  
866-704-7172—Home
- Vonage**  
vonage.com  
855-896-9029
- YourTel (TerraCom Wireless)**  
yourtelwireless.com  
855-299-9991

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## ABOUT THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE

The Ratewatcher Telecom Guide is published by the Office of the Public Advocate, the state agency created to represent public utility consumers. In addition, the Office of the Public Advocate provides information to consumers about unregulated communications services such as Internet and cellular services that are available to Maine consumers.

Paperless Option: An electronic version of the Ratewatcher Telecom Guide is available free of charge to all Maine residents on the Office of the Public Advocate's web page ([www.maine.gov/meopa](http://www.maine.gov/meopa)) or upon request by emailing [opa@maine.gov](mailto:opa@maine.gov). If you would like to receive future editions of the Ratewatcher electronically, please let us know.



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