

Consumer Guide to Telephone Service

			
Traditional Wireline Service	Wireless Service	Cable-Based Service	Internet-Based Service

Telephone Providers and Availability

<p>Uses underground and/or aerial cable facilities to transmit local and long distance calls; service is “fixed” and cannot be used at a location other than where it is installed.</p>	<p>Uses a combination of radio and wired facilities to provide service. Service is not “fixed” and may be used at many locations.</p>	<p>Uses the local cable TV company’s network to provide telephone service. Service is “fixed” and cannot be used at a location other than where it is installed.</p>	<p>Uses broadband connections (high speed/cable modem/DSL) to provide telephone service. Service may be used at multiple locations.</p>
<p>Service available throughout New York State.</p>	<p>Service is generally available throughout New York State, although service quality varies depending on the number and proximity of transmission facilities.</p>	<p>Service is available in New York State where there are cable facilities equipped for voice transmission.</p>	<p>Service is generally offered wherever broadband connections are available; there may be some areas in New York State where the necessary facilities are not available.</p>

			
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Service Plans: Billing

<p>Generally Flat Rate service (unlimited local calls for one monthly rate), and some companies may offer Message Rate service (billed on per-call basis).</p> <p>Call ID, call waiting, voicemail, and other features are available; they may be purchased separately or bundled with monthly plans.</p> <p>Long distance is available and may be purchased from your local service provider, or from a number of other long distance companies.</p> <p>Does not require a contract but may require a deposit.</p>	<p>Prepaid (pre-set number of minutes) or monthly plans (with a pre-determined number of minutes per month) are available. Some companies have recently introduced unlimited calling plans. Charges are usually incurred for incoming calls.</p> <p>Call ID, call waiting, and voicemail are available and may be included in some packages.</p> <p>Generally includes both local and long distance calls. Usage over a pre-set limit may be billed at a higher per-minute rate; some companies allow unused minutes to roll over to the next month.</p> <p>Substantial “roaming” charges may accrue if calls are made or received from outside the service plan’s home calling area.</p> <p>A contract for a fixed term is usually required for plans other than prepaid plans. Substantial fees may apply for early termination.</p>	<p>Generally Flat Rate service (unlimited local calls for one monthly rate). Generally offers bundled service, which can include cable and/or Internet access, along with telephone service.</p> <p>Call ID, call forwarding, and voicemail are usually included in the fixed monthly charge.</p> <p>Includes long distance calling.</p> <p>A contract is not generally required.</p>	<p>Generally offers three plans: (1) pre-set number of minutes; (2) unlimited monthly calling; or (3) discounted monthly rate for unlimited calling if you pay for one year or more of service in advance.</p> <p>May offer Call ID, call forwarding and voice mail.</p> <p>Includes long distance calling.</p> <p>Usually does not require a contract; requires credit card billing.</p>
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Fees and Taxes

Federal, state or local taxes and fees (such as Universal Service fee and E911 surcharge) are added as separate line items to the service cost.	Federal, state and/or local taxes and fees are added to the service cost.	Federal, state and/or local taxes and fees are added to the service cost.	Federal, state and/or local taxes and fees are added to the service cost.
Activation charges apply.	Activation charges generally apply.	Activation and equipment charges may apply.	Activation and equipment charges may apply.

Emergency 911 Service

Provides Enhanced 911 (E911) service. 911 surcharges are added to the bill.	Provides E911 service; may be some limitations, depending on location of transmission facilities. 911 surcharges are added to the bill.	Provides E911 service, based on service location. 911 surcharges may be added to the bill.	Provides E911 service, but you must register your address with your provider. You must notify the company if you move to another location to ensure 911 calls identify the correct address.
Available everywhere in New York State from a traditional wireline phone; automatically connects a call to an emergency services operator, and provides the calling telephone number and the address where the call originated.	In almost all counties in New York State, wireless companies can provide approximate geographic location information.	Generally available statewide, wherever a cable company provides service; provides the calling telephone number and the address where the call originated.	Because you may use your service at multiple locations, E911 will not be available if you are away from the phone's registered location.

			
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Power Outages

Service is not usually affected, but cordless phones, which rely on an electrical connection, will not operate.	If the cellular phone is charged, calls may be made during power outages. The battery may be charged through a car accessory outlet.	Cable phones are dependent on an electrical power source and some companies provide a battery backup to consumers so service will continue to function for a few hours.	Power outages or other disruptions of internet service will curtail the ability to use the telephone service, unless battery backup is available.
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Number Portability

Must allow new customers to keep their existing telephone numbers, or allow existing customers to transfer their telephone numbers to any wireline, wireless, cable or internet-based service provider. Possible geographic restrictions outside the local exchange.	Must allow new customers to keep their existing telephone numbers, or allow existing customers to transfer their telephone numbers to any wireline, wireless, cable or internet-based service provider. Possible geographic restrictions.	Must allow new customers to keep their existing telephone numbers, or allow existing customers to transfer their telephone numbers to any wireline, wireless, cable or internet-based service provider. Possible geographic restrictions.	Must allow new customers to keep their existing telephone numbers, or allow existing customers to transfer their telephone numbers to any wireline, wireless, cable or internet-based service provider. Possible geographic or technical restrictions.
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Service Termination

<p>Service can be terminated for failure to pay charges due, after written notification. Partial payments are applied to local service charges.</p>	<p>Typical wireless contracts provide that a company may, without notice, suspend or terminate service at any time for any reason.</p>	<p>Most companies will notify you in writing if there is an overdue balance and provide a date by which the payment must be made to avoid disconnection.</p>	<p>Companies may suspend or terminate your service usually without written notification if any charges for services are unpaid for any reason.</p>
<p>Reactivation charges usually apply.</p>	<p>Reactivation charges may apply</p>	<p>Reactivation charges do apply, and your number may be changed.</p>	<p>Reactivation charges may apply, and your number may be changed.</p>
<p>If you have a Medical Emergency Condition you can apply to receive an extra 30 days of local service.</p>			

Special Programs

<p>Provides access to Telecommunications Relay Services for hearing impaired consumers, and may offer Talking Call ID.</p>	<p>Provides access to Telecommunications Relay Services for hearing impaired consumers, but may not offer Talking Call ID. Video Relay Services are available using a high-speed internet connection and special equipment.</p>	<p>Provides access to Telecommunications Relay Services for hearing impaired consumers, but may not offer Talking Call ID.</p>	<p>The Telecommunications Relay Service for hearing impaired consumers is available with the help of a Relay Operator.</p>
<p>Provides Lifeline service to low-income consumers. This program offers local telephone service at a reduced monthly rate.</p>	<p>Some wireless companies offer Lifeline service.</p>	<p>Generally does not offer Lifeline service.</p>	<p>Video Relay Services also may be available at no charge.</p>
			<p>Does not offer Lifeline service.</p>

			
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Directory/Directory Listing

<p>Required to publish annual directories.</p> <p>Lists all customers but you may request to have your number omitted from a directory, however a monthly charge will apply to do so.</p>	<p>Do not usually provide directories.</p> <p>May provide listings in the local wireline company's directory, but a monthly charge may apply.</p>	<p>Not required to provide a directory.</p> <p>May provide listings in the local wireline company's directory, under certain circumstances.</p>	<p>Directories are not published or distributed.</p> <p>May provide listings in the local wireline company's directory, but a monthly charge may apply.</p>
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Consumer Protections

<p>Offers Call ID blocking, Anonymous Call Rejection, and End User Blocking.</p> <p>Companies are required to educate customers on privacy expectations, in accordance with the NYS Public Service Commission privacy policies and its Automatic Number Identification Guidelines.</p>	<p>Offers Call ID blocking but doesn't always allow you to block specific numbers on an incoming basis, like toll free numbers. May offer text message blocking.</p> <p>Will comply with applicable state and federal laws, but are not required to comply with the NYS Public Service Commission privacy policies.</p>	<p>Offers Call ID blocking, and some companies may also offer End User Blocking.</p> <p>Has extensive individual privacy policies which explain what information is collected and how disclosure of personally identifiable information is handled.</p>	<p>Offers Call ID blocking and Anonymous Call Rejection.</p> <p>Companies are not subject to the NYS Public Service Commission privacy policies, but companies usually have individual privacy policies.</p>
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Dispute Resolution

<p>Consumers should initially contact the company, however, if the dispute cannot be settled, contact the New York State Public Service Commission.</p>	<p>Consumers should initially contact the company, however; if the dispute cannot be settled, contact the New York State Consumer Protection Board, the Office of the Attorney General of New York, or the Federal Communications Commission. Some contracts may provide for arbitration of disputes.</p>	<p>Consumers should initially contact the company, however; if the dispute cannot be settled, contact the New York State Consumer Protection Board, the Office of the Attorney General of New York, or the Federal Communications Commission.</p>	<p>Consumers should initially contact the company, however; if the dispute cannot be settled, contact the New York State Consumer Protection Board and the Office of the Attorney General of New York. The FCC will accept complaints on a limited basis.</p>
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