All Minnesotans should have a reliable phone line

Minnesotans need a reliable phone line to call 911, to work from home, for online learning, to connect with family and for other vital communication needs.

Access to reliable phone service is not the same for every Minnesotan. Across the state, it can be more difficult and expensive to serve some than others. For example, in some areas, cell phone service is not available.

Minnesotans use several different technologies to communicate:
- Traditional landlines (wireline)
- Voice over Internet Protocol or VoIP (wireline)
- Cell phones (wireless)

Voice over Internet Protocol and traditional landlines are both wireline technologies. Companies use the same physical network infrastructure to provide broadband and phone service to any particular household and may use multiple types of technologies throughout their network. Copper or fiber can deliver both phone and broadband service to a household, and there is no need for more than a single line into an individual household.

Minnesotans, particularly businesses, local government and those in Greater Minnesota, continue to use wireline telephones to meet their needs

Wireline phone service continues to be the choice, and necessity, for many Minnesotans. Some Minnesotans, because of where they live, are harder to serve. In Greater Minnesota, there is a higher usage of wireline service, which includes both traditional landlines and voice over internet protocol services.

The map shows residential households with wireline service by county, darker counties have a higher percentage of residential households with wireline service. There are 18 counties with 60% or more of households with wireline service. Each of these counties is in Greater Minnesota. The highest percentage of wireline households are in Cass, Grant and Norman counties, each with 80%, and 88% of households in Cook County have wireline voice telephone service.
While business and government subscribe to some wireless services, **business customers have not stopped using their wireline telephones**. Wireline services may be desired for sound quality, for security purposes or due to the existing systems owned by the business or government subscriber that only work with a wireline connection, such as alarm systems. For all wireline business and government service (both traditional landline and voice over internet protocol) there was a net increase of **184,000 lines** between December 2008 and December 2020.

**More than 800,000 residential customers rely on wireline voice service. More than 1,200,000 business and government customers rely on traditional wireline voice service.**

According to FCC data, there are almost six million mobile wireless subscriptions in Minnesota. The trend in wireless has shown some modest declines in the last couple of years, compared to increases that occurred in earlier periods.

Traditional landlines make up about 38% of total wirelines. That's **nearly 800,000 traditional landline subscriptions in Minnesota**.

**Universal service in Minnesota in 2022**

The principle that all Americans should have access to the communications network is referred to as “universal service” and it dates back to the Communications Act of 1934.

Since that time, the Minnesota state legislature and U.S. Congress have enacted legislation to ensure there was a “carrier of last resort” so that telephone companies couldn’t just leave an area without proving that there was another viable option. **To this day, Minnesotans rely on this legislation for phone service.**

**Contact us**

The Minnesota Department of Commerce represents the public interest in all aspects of the regulatory process to promote competition and innovation and to ensure that reliable telecommunications services are provided to all. Contact the Minnesota Department of Commerce with questions.

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