

Ohioans Protecting Telephone Consumers (OPTC) Press Conference

“What will basic telephone service do for me?

- **You can't put a price on peace of mind – Your home phone is worth more than ever with service plans to fit any budget.**
- **For that time you discovered you were allergic to peanuts – When you need it most in an emergency.**
- **For the calls that matter the most –“**

That quote was taken from the website of the largest telecom company operating in the state. If the legislation being discussed today is enacted, the quoted sales pitch would become patently false.

- **Good morning, I am Ron Bridges, Director, Policy and Government Affairs for AARP. AARP members believe Ohioans deserve fair, competitive, reasonably priced and reliable local telephone service.**
- **The minimum telephone service standards were adopted to give telecommunications providers clear objectives on which to focus their attention. Those standards establish service guarantees to make good on the promise of peace of mind and give customers a mechanism to hold telecom providers accountable. In addition, if true competition existed, minimum service standards would provide a standardized set of transparent compliance statistics, which would let consumers more fairly compare the service reliability of telecom providers.**
- **Ohio's seniors, like seniors elsewhere, rely on landline service to connect with their family, doctors, emergency services and community.**
- **According to the Division of Health Interview Statistics within the National Center for Health Statistics, the percentage of adults age 65+ switching to become a wireless-only households was 0.9% in 2005 and just 3.3% in 2008. Stated another way, 96% of 65+ households still depend on traditional landline telephone service.**
- **If this legislation is enacted, there will be a downward spiral in service quality. For example, the period of time telephone companies have to restore an out-of-service telephone line would increase from 24 hours to 72 hours (three days). This means Ohio's elderly could be alone and without telephone service for several days with no way to call for help. So much for peace of mind. Telephone companies would only be responsible to credit customers who engage in the formal complaint process at the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, including showing up in Columbus for a hearing.**
- **AARP believes reliable basic telephone service is too important to give telephone companies up to three days to restore outages.**

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- **And as Janine mentioned, there would be no automatic credits for delayed service restoration. Seniors wanting a credit would need to either negotiate with the company or go through the PUCO complaint process.**

(TURN OVER TO Joe Maskovyak, Ohio Poverty Law Center)

AT&T: Without a landline phone, you could die

By [Tim Conneally](#) | Published July 8, 2009, 12:05 PM

AT&T and an associated group of telecommunications companies under the name "National Emergency Number Association" (NENA) released the results of a June survey which concludes that Americans need to have an emergency communications plan based around a landline connection.

"A big part of this is knowing about the options available for dialing 911," NENA Chief Executive Officer, Brian Fontes said in a statement. "The more choices you have to reach 911 in an emergency, the better, and a corded landline phone should be one of those options. It provides the security of a home phone line connection to 911 so that in most cases first responders know your home address."

Landline abandonment is a trend that just keeps growing, and AT&T's fixed line subsidiaries are employing tried and true fear-based marketing to stanch the persistent customer loss.

The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics [released a survey](#) for the first half of 2008 which showed that 17.5% of American homes were wireless only, and that among homes with both wireless and wireline phones a further 13.3% did all or almost all of their calling on their wireless phone. [By the second half of the year](#), the number of wireless-only homes had jumped 2.7 percentage points, the largest 6-month increase in the six years NHIS has been doing the surveys.

AT&T therefore says a home base connection is simply a security essential, citing such crises as -- taken verbatim from the company's report -- "[that time you discovered you were allergic to peanuts](#)," or losing your cell phone.

While it is true that unlike mobile phones, a landline can work with no electrical power, and that emergency preparedness is always wise, there's an equal number of situations where a landline will not come in handy:

1. You live alone.
2. Your home is engulfed in flames and you're forced outside.
3. An escaped murderer is hiding in your attic (see 2.)
4. [There is a telecommunications workers' strike](#).
5. An emergency happens when no one is home.

These are all situations where the redundant connection (mobile) becomes the fallback option. But the problem is that maintaining a legacy connection is costly, and when customers are receiving comparable service from their wireless or cable VoIP providers, they're really being presented with no incentive to keep paying.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/earlyrelease/wireless200905.htm>

CELLULAR PHONE USAGE

Table 2b. Percentage of adults living in wireless-only households, by age and by calendar half-years: United States, January 2005-December 2008

Age	Calendar half-year								95% confidence interval ²
	Jan-Jun 2005	Jul-Dec 2005	Jan-Jun 2006	Jul-Dec 2006	Jan-Jun 2007 ¹	Jul-Dec 2007	Jan-Jun 2008	Jul-Dec 2008	
	Percent								
18-24 years	16.6	17.5	22.6	25.2	27.9	30.6	31.4	33.1	29.33 - 37.16
25-29 years	16.5	19.8	22.3	29.1	30.6	34.5	35.7	41.5	38.34 - 44.67
30-44 years	6.5	7.8	9.4	12.4	12.6	15.5	19.1	21.6	19.87 - 23.40
45-64 years	3.2	3.7	5.3	6.1	7.1	8.0	9.2	11.6	10.50 - 12.76
65+ years	0.9	1.2	1.3	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.8	3.3	2.68 - 3.98

The percentage of adults age 65+ switching to become a **wireless-only households was 0.9% in 2005 and just 3.3% in 2008. Stated another way, 96% of 65+ households still depend on traditional landline telephone service.**

DATA SOURCE: National Health Interview Survey, January 2005-December 2008. Data are based on household interviews of a sample of the civilian, noninstitutionalized population.

² Confidence intervals refer to the time period July through December 2008.

CELLULAR PHONE USAGE

Table 3c. Percentage of adults living in wireless-mostly households, by age and by calendar half-years: United States, January 2007-December 2008					
Age	Jan-Jun 2007	Jul-Dec 2007	Jan-Jun 2008	Jul-Dec 2008	95% confidence interval ¹
	Percent ²				
18-24 years	17.3	18.2	19.2	18.8	15.97 - 22.00
25-29 years	17.2	19.7	17.3	18.3	15.95 - 20.97
30-44 years	15.5	17.3	18.2	19.0	17.54 - 20.59
45-64 years	11.5	13.0	13.8	15.4	14.20 - 16.72
65 years and over	3.4	3.9	4.4	4.9	4.00 - 5.99

Percentage of adults age 65+ switching to become a wireless-mostly households was 3.4% in 2005 and just 4.9% in 2008.

¹ Confidence intervals refer to the estimate of the percentage of adults living in wireless-mostly households for the time period July through December 2008.

Wireless Substitution: Early Release of Estimates From the National Health Interview Survey, July-December 2008

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