

[← Back](#)

# AT & T wants to cut landline service

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AT & T is asking a state agency for permission to end landline service for most of the state.

Sandra Weiss, a Palo Alto resident who has been raising awareness of AT & T's proposal at the Avenidas Senior Center, says the California Public Utilities Commission should either deny AT & T's request or bring in another reliable company to take over the landlines.

"Anyone in an area where there are electrical outages has to have a landline," Weiss told the Post while using her landline connection. "Especially people with chronic conditions or (who) have small children. If you don't have power and your cellphone and laptop are out of juice, then you're in some terrible trouble," she said.

AT & T wants to end its obligation to provide Californians with landlines. AT & T is not proposing to have another company step in to be the landline of last resort provider, according to its proposal with the CPUC. This could result in landline prices increasing, switching landline providers, or in the worst case - getting rid of your landline once and for all, which gives some people, such as Weiss, heartburn when thinking about power outages.

## Service in a disaster

Weiss said an AT & T representative once tried to talk her out of having a landline and when she asked about losing phone service during a power outage, she was told to simply have two cellphones.

Sandra Bardas of Menlo Park wrote into the CPUC urging them to deny AT & T's request - pointing out that cell phones aren't "an all-encompassing mode of communication," as cell service outages are common during various disasters.

"Please deny this request by AT & T to renege on their obligation as a carrier. It makes no sense to put all our eggs in one VoIP basket. Cell coverage is spotty in urban areas, and worse in rural areas, and therefore not reliable in an emergency," wrote Ed Miller of Redwood City.

## Tell 911 your city first

Having only a cellphone during an emergency has "introduced some complexity," said Palo Alto's Chief of Emergency Services Ken Dueker.

Dueker says the most important thing to say when calling 911 is where you are, including the city. Then tell the dispatcher what is happening.

There can be instances when your cellphone can get routed to the CHP Bay Area dispatch

center in Vallejo, which makes it even more important to tell the dispatcher where you are, so they can connect you to the right area's dispatch center.

Dueker also plugged for the city's Emergency Services Volunteer program, which has a two-way radio network that is independent of phone carriers.

Michelle Shinseki, head of communications at Avenidas, says the AT & T discussion has been going on at the senior center among people like Weiss who go to the center and use its services. Shinseki said quite a few senior citizens know how to use various technologies - particularly to contact their grandchildren - but she noted there is a wide range of knowledge among Avenidas patrons.

#### Classes on phone use

If you're still using your landline and are worried about having to rely on a cellphone - multiple local libraries offer tech help programs. Redwood City offers tech assistance on Thursdays at the downtown library on Middlefield Road. Deputy City Manager Jennifer Yamaguma said usually people who come in are trying to learn about smart phone features, such as using apps and uploading photos to the cloud.

The CPUC is holding hearings on the proposed change, one is in Ukiah on Feb. 22 and another in Indio on March 14. Both hearings are in-person only. The Bay Area will be able to comment during two hearings on March 19 - at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. that will be accessible via a webcast on the CPUC's website or by calling in.

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**Page:** 1

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