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Summer 2015

# Ratewatcher Telecom Guide Summer 2015

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# Ratewatcher

## TELECOM GUIDE

VOLUME 25 | SUMMER 2015

A PUBLICATION OF THE MAINE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE  
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## MAINE OVERHAULS BROADBAND POLICY

**T**HERE WERE AS MANY AS 35 BILLS RELATING TO BROADBAND introduced in the 127th Session of the Maine Legislature, which ended this past July. These bills reflect a groundswell of public interest, particularly in the area of municipal broadband, as Maine's smallest towns and largest cities embarked on planning and investment to improve their broadband infrastructure. Dozens of Mainers, from all walks of life, packed legislative hearings to explain the importance of affordable, high-speed broadband to their lives and livelihoods.

The Legislature ultimately enacted four laws that together lay an important foundation for future expansion of broadband in Maine. Highlights include:

- Elimination of the Broadband Sustainability Fee, a state surcharge on the federally funded 3 Ring Binder that hindered use of this important infrastructure.
- A requirement that the ConnectME Authority, Maine's agency responsible for expanding access to broadband, develop and present a three-year broadband strategic plan to the Legislature by February of 2016.
- A directive to the ConnectME Authority to provide matching funds for community broadband planning efforts.
- Allowing municipalities to establish "regional municipal utility districts" to provide or promote broadband access, and to issue revenue bonds.
- Establishment of a Municipal Gigabit Broadband Fund, which if fully funded, could provide funding for fiber broadband networks for cities and towns.

Notably absent from this list is more funding for broadband, an outcome sought in many of the bills. Legislation carried over until the second session may address this need. Nonetheless, the laws enacted represent the first major changes to the state's broadband policy since the ConnectME Authority was created in 2005. To review the broadband legislation and for more information on ConnectME, visit [maine.gov/connectme](http://maine.gov/connectme).

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# BROADBAND

## MAINE ADOPTS NEW, HIGHER BROADBAND STANDARD

By law, the ConnectME Authority must define what parts of Maine are “unserved” without access to adequate broadband. In January 2015, ConnectME revised its definition of broadband to a new, higher speed.

Until January’s decision, the Authority considered service that could offer download speeds of 1.5 Mbps to be broadband. While this is about 30 times faster than dial-up internet access, that speed isn’t fast enough for many common internet activities, such as streaming HD video (think Netflix) or online gaming. Also, the old standard didn’t include any minimum upload speed, the speed at which users can send information back to the Internet. Upload speeds are particularly important for businesses and telecommuters, which use real time video-conferencing or cloud-based services.

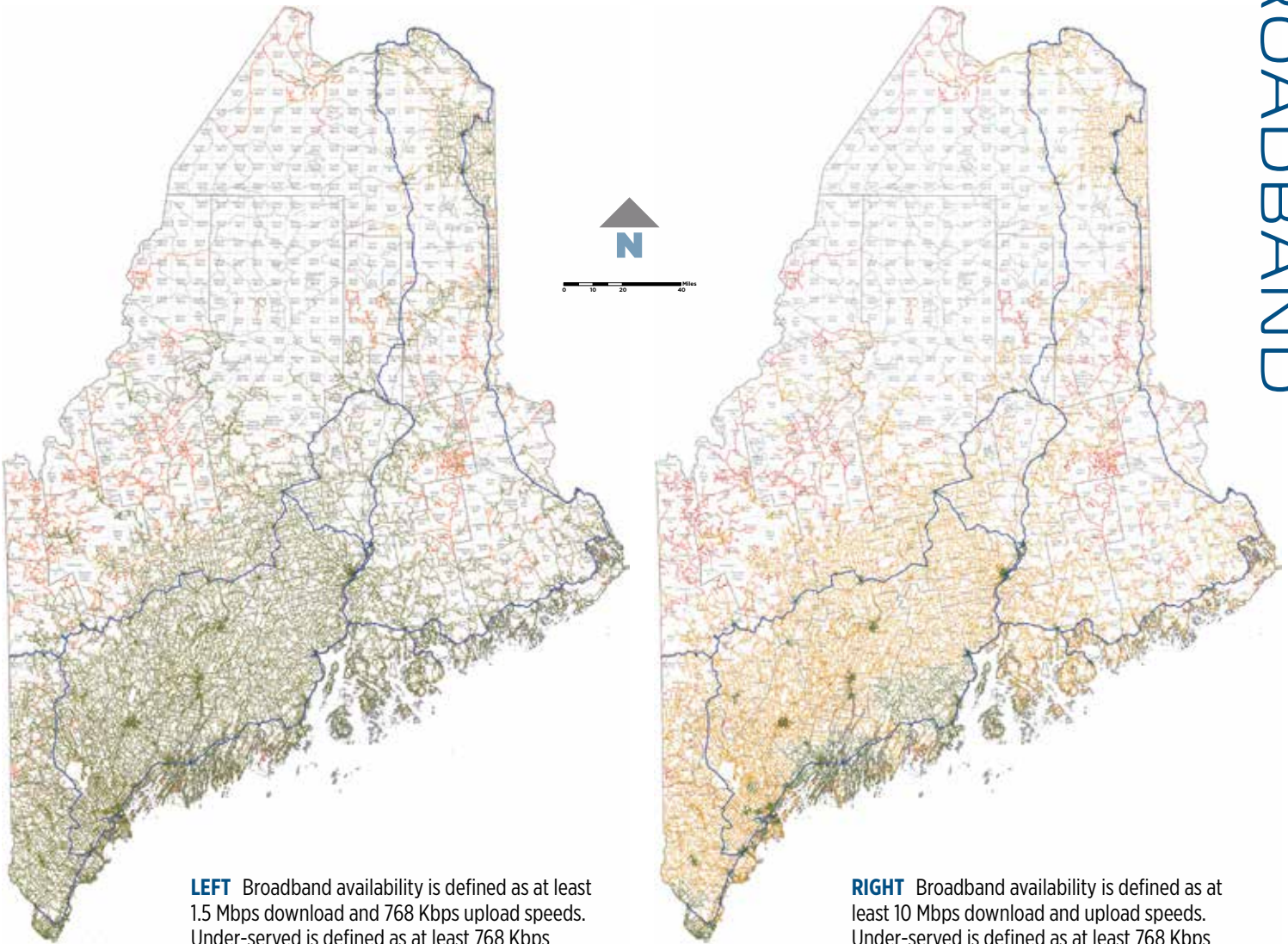
The new standard of 10 Mbps symmetric (both up and down) is fast enough to allow customers to do these activities and many others—services that customers in many parts of the country take for granted. Adopting a symmetric standard is especially important for Maine, where many businesses are small businesses for whom upload speeds are as important

as download speeds. Not all customers will need these speeds right now, but this helps make sure we have the networks we want in the future.

Because Maine’s old speed definition was so low, it made Maine’s broadband service look better than it was. Under the old definition, 94% of the state had access to broadband, leaving just 6% “unserved.” Under the new definition, just 12% of the state’s population, mostly in the center of the state’s urban areas, qualifies as “served.”

For now, the biggest impact of this change will be to make more of the state eligible for financial support from the ConnectME Authority. It may also mean that a grant recipient must provide service that meets the new definition to receive funding. But with such a small percentage of Maine currently meeting the definition, the scope of Maine’s broadband challenges are clear. Over the next eight months, the ConnectME will be developing its plan to address these challenges and will be seeking input from the public.





**LEFT** Broadband availability is defined as at least 1.5 Mbps download and 768 Kbps upload speeds. Under-served is defined as at least 768 Kbps download and 200 Kbps upload speeds, but less than 1.5 Mbps download and 768 Kbps upload.

**RIGHT** Broadband availability is defined as at least 10 Mbps download and upload speeds. Under-served is defined as at least 768 Kbps download and 200 Kbps upload speeds, but less than 10 Mbps download and upload.

## BROADBAND SERVICE AVAILABILITY

- Served Streets: 1.5 Mbps Download / 768 Kbps Upload (LEFT) | 10 Mbps Download and Upload (RIGHT)
- Under-Served Streets: 768 Kbps Download / 200 Kbps Upload
- Streets with No Service
- Streets with No Addresses
- 3 Ring Binder Fiber Network

The map on the left shows the area of Maine qualifying as served by broadband under the previous definition of 1.5 Mbps download. The map on the right shows the large percentage of Maine now unserved with the updated broadband definition, as of January 2015.

Maps courtesy of



# INTERNET SPEEDS EXPLAINED

Most modern internet services are measured in megabits per second or Mbps. A 1 Mbps connection provides speeds of 1 million bits per second, or roughly 100 pages of plain text per second. Typically, broadband services advertise both download and upload speeds. Download speeds refer to the speed at which you can obtain information from the network (such as by downloading a song), and upload speeds describe the speed at which you can send information back out (such as by sending an email with an attachment). In Maine, the download

speeds for residential broadband services range from 768 kilobits per second (Kbps) to 1 Gigabits per second (Gbps); 1,000 Kbps equals 1 Mbps, and 1,000 Mbps equals 1 Gbps. In practical terms, download speed affects how long it takes for a web page to load or to download pictures, or the quality of streaming video. For example, Netflix recommends a broadband connection of at least 1.5 Mbps to stream movies online, at least 3 Mbps to stream DVD quality video, and at least 5 Mbps for HD quality video.

## HOW TO CHECK YOUR BROADBAND SPEED

Paying for internet access, particularly at higher speeds, can be a big monthly commitment. So it's important to be sure you get what you're paying for. Sometimes speeds can lag below the level promised by your internet service provider. To find out the data speeds you're actually getting, you'll need to run a speed test. This is a free, easy and accurate way to assess the connection's upload and download speeds. We recommend taking the test at different times throughout the day, as speeds may vary depending on network congestion.

Maine's ConnectME Authority offers a free speed test that also logs the address and provider, helping to map current broadband internet offerings across the state. To access the speed

test, visit [maine.gov/connectme](http://maine.gov/connectme) and click the link "Take the Speed Test." Once the test site loads, enter the street address of your current location and click "Begin Test." The test is powered by Ookla and should take less than a minute to complete. The test results will show the connection's upload and download speeds as measured in Mbps. The results may show slower speeds than the plan advertises. All plans list speeds as "up to" a high end number. However, if the performance is consistently lower than the advertised number, call your Internet Service Provider (ISP) and have them look into the connection. The company may be able to boost the network performance or suggest other technical fixes to increase your speeds.



# STOP PAYING FOR AOL

In its most recent earnings report, AOL told investors that it still has 2.1 million subscribers to its dial-up service. While some people may still need to pay for dial-up internet service, it is likely that many of these accounts are on automatic bill payments, and are no longer being used.

People may keep paying for their accounts out of fear that if they stop, they will lose the AOL email address they've have had for many years. If you find that you are paying for AOL dial-up service that you no longer need, call AOL Support at 800-827-6364 to convert your account into a free account.

## MOBILE HOTSPOTS ALLOW YOU TO ACCESS THE INTERNET WHILE ON THE GO

All major cell phone providers currently offer devices that create a wireless internet hotspot, allowing a portable broadband connection via their cellular data service. This allows 5 to 10 phones, laptops, tablets and other types of mobile devices within reach of the hotspot to access the internet. The quality and speed of your connection is dependent on the strength of the signal and whether there is 3G or 4G service coverage.

This can be particularly useful for families who travel regularly and have several devices that connect to the internet, by allowing internet connections in vehicles traveling on road trips. In areas without wired broadband options, it may provide a viable broadband alternative at home. As with any mobile data plan, it is important to be aware of the amount of data your plan has and watch your usage to ensure that you do not exceed any caps.

## HOW TO USE THESE CHARTS

Prices for the services detailed in this publication change frequently. The charts included in this guide reflect the standard pricing available as of the time of publication. Many of these providers offer promotional deals to new and existing customers. In some cases, these deals offer service for a fraction of the price listed in our charts. In order to ensure that you are getting the best possible deal, we strongly recommended that you contact each company directly to confirm pricing prior to contracting their services. There is a complete company directory available on page 23.

### WiFi Hotspot Cellular Service

- All providers offer service across Maine, but internet quality is tied to the signal strength in your area.
- Device costs range from \$0-\$200 depending on the company and on length of contract.

COMPANY	PLAN COST (DATA CAP)	ROLLOVER DATA	OVERAGE CHARGES
<b>AT&amp;T</b>	\$50/mo. (5 GB)	No	\$10 per 1 GB
<b>Axiom Technologies</b>	\$5/mo. (300 MB)   \$335/mo. (50 GB) + \$20/mo. hotspot charge	No	No charges, but internet speed decreases
<b>T-Mobile</b>	\$20/mo. (1 GB)   \$70/mo. (11 GB)	Yes	No charges, but internet speed decreases
<b>US Cellular</b>	\$5/mo. (300 MB)   \$335/mo. (50 GB) + \$20/mo hotspot charge	No	No charges, but internet speed decreases
<b>Verizon</b>	\$30/mo. (1 GB)   \$80/mo. (10 GB) + \$20/mo. hotspot charge	No	\$15/500 MB



## 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>								
<b>Axiom Technologies</b>	Washington	1.5 Mbps/384 Kbps	\$39.99	768 Kbps, 1.5 Mbps, 3 Mbps, 7 Mbps, 10 Mbps, 15 Mbps, 20 Mbps	12 mos.	\$99	\$2.50/mo. for DSL modem	\$250
<b>Chebeague.net, LLC</b>	Cumberland	1 Mbps	\$43	1 Mbps, 3 Mbps, 6 Mbps	N/A	\$250	\$0	\$0
<b>Coastal Telco Services, Inc.</b>	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo	3 Mbps/1 Mbps	\$38	Up to 10 Mbps/2 Mbps	1 year	From \$0	From \$47	\$99
<b>FairPoint NNE</b>	All 16 counties	1.5 Mbps/768 Kbps	\$29.99	3 Mbps, 7 Mbps, 10 Mbps, 15 Mbps, 20 Mbps, 25 Mbps	1 year	\$79 or Free self installation	\$3.99/mo. or \$49.99	\$79

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>								
<b>FairPoint Classics</b>	York, Cumberland, Oxford, Aroostook, Pisataquis, Penobscot, Hancock	1.5 Mbps/768 Kbps	\$40.95	4 Mbps, 7 Mbps, 12 Mbps, 15 Mbps	Monthly	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>GWI</b>	All 16 counties	7 Mbps/1 Mbps	\$46.95	Up to 20 Mbps/1 Mbps	N/A	\$50 or Free self installation	\$30 or \$3/mo. for 10 mos.	\$0
<b>Lincolnton Networks, Inc.</b>	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo	3 Mbps/1 Mbps	\$38	Up to 10 Mbps/2 Mbps	1 year	From \$0	From \$47	\$99
<b>MaineStream Internet</b>	Penobscot, Piscataquis	1.5 Mbps/.5 Mbps	\$47.95	3 Mbps/.75 Mbps, 10 Mbps/1 Mbps	N/A	\$70	\$35	\$0
<b>North Country Broadband</b>	Piscataquis	1.5 Mbps/1.5 Mbps	\$44.95	3 Mbps to 8 Mbps	12 mos.	\$99.95	\$0	\$250
<b>Oxford Networks</b>	Oxford, Androscoggin	5 Mbps/1 Mbps	\$37.95	Up to 24 Mbps	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Pioneer Broadband</b>	Parts of Aroostook, Washington, Penobscot	Up to 24 Mbps/1 Mbps	\$49.95	As fast as the line will support	24 mos.	\$0	\$0	Balance of agreement
<b>Premium Choice Broadband</b>	Hancock	1.5 Mbps/384 Kbps	\$39.95	3 Mbps/768 Kbps, 5 Mbps/768 Kbps	Monthly	\$99.95	\$0	\$0
<b>TDS Telecom</b>	Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Penobscot, Somerset	1 Mbps/512 Kbps	\$28.95	5 Mbps, 15 Mbps, and 25 Mbps	1 Mbps/12 mos. or \$0 all other speeds	\$0	\$4.95/mo.	\$99
<b>Tidewater Telecom, Inc.</b>	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo	3 Mbps/1 Mbps	\$38	Up to 10 Mbps/2 Mbps	1 year	From \$0	From \$47	\$99
<b>UniTel</b>	Parts of Waldo, Kennebec & Penobscot	4 Mbps/1 Mbps	\$19.99	6 Mbps/1 Mbps, 10 Mbps/1 Mbps, 10 Mbps/2 Mbps, 10 Mbps/10 Mbps, Higher speeds available upon request	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>CABLE</b>								
<b>Bee Line Cable</b>	Somerset, Franklin, Penobscot	1 Mbps/256 Kbps	\$34.95	1 Mbps/256 Kbps, 4 Mbps/384 Kbps, 10 Mbps/1 Mbps	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Comcast</b>	Androscoggin, Cumberland, York, Sagadahoc	3 Mbps/768 Kbps	\$39.95	6 Mbps, 25 Mbps, 105 Mbps, 150 Mbps, 505 Mbps	N/A	\$99.95	\$10/mo.	\$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
<b>Metrocast</b>	York	1.5 Mbps/384 Kbps	\$30	5 Mbps/512 Kbps, 20 Mbps/2 Mbps, 75 Mbps/5 Mbps	N/A	\$99.95	\$6 to \$7/mo.	\$0
<b>Premium Choice Broadband</b>	Piscataquis	1.5 Mbps/512 Kbps	\$29.95	3 Mbps/1 Mbps, 5 Mbps/1.5 Mbps	Monthly	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Time Warner Cable</b>	All 16 counties	2 Mbps/1 Mbps	\$14.99	Up to 50 Mbps/5 Mbps	N/A	\$39.99	\$8/mo.	\$0
<b>FIBER</b>								
<b>Axiom Technologies</b>	All 16 counties	Speed varies by contract	Price varies by contract	Up to 1 Gbps	Varies— Usually 2–5 years	Varies	Varies	Varies per contract— typically a percentage of the total unpaid balance
<b>Coastal Telco Services, Inc.</b>	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo	6 Mbps/6 Mbps	\$48	Up to 1 Gbps/1 Gbps +	1 year	From \$0	From \$0	\$99
<b>GWI</b>	Cumberland, Knox	1 Gbps	\$69.95	N/A	12 mos.	\$299.95	N/A	Remaining monthly fees
<b>Lincolntown Networks, Inc.</b>	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo	6 Mbps/6 Mbps	\$48	Up to 1 Gbps/1 Gbps +	1 year	From \$0	From \$0	\$99
<b>MaineStream Internet</b>	Penobscot	3 Mbps/3 Mbps	\$52.95	10 Mbps/10 Mbps, 20 Mbps/20 Mbps	1 year	\$199.95	Included in Installation Fee	80% of remaining term, minimum \$100
<b>North Country Broadband</b>	Piscataquis	3 Mbps	\$44.95	5 Mbps/up to 10 Mbps	12 Active mos.	\$199.95	\$0	\$250
<b>Pioneer Broadband</b>	Parts of Aroostook, Washington, Penobscot	30 Mbps/5 Mbps	\$49.95	Up to 1 Gbps	24 mos.	\$100	\$0	Balance of contract
<b>TDS Telecom</b>	Penobscot	1 Mbps/512 Kbps	\$28.95	5 Mbps, 15 Mbps, 25 Mbps, 50 Mbps	1 Mbps/12 mos. or \$0 all other speeds	\$0	\$4.95/mo.	\$99
<b>Tidewater Telecom, Inc.</b>	Lincoln, Knox, Waldo	6 Mbps/6 Mbps	\$48	Up to 1 Gbps/1 Gbps +	1 year	From \$0	From \$0	\$99

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>Union River Telephone Co. d/b/a Rivah. Net</b>	Hancock and Washington Counties (URT serving area)	5 Mbps/1 Mbps	\$44.95	10 Mbps/1 Mbps, 20 Mbps/2 Mbps, 30 Mbps/25 Mbps	6 mos.	\$0	\$0	\$25
<b>UniTel</b>	Parts of Waldo, Kennebec & Penobscot (coming Summer/Fall 2015)	15 Mbps/15 Mbps	\$69.95	25 Mbps/25 Mbps, 50 Mbps/50 Mbps, 100 Mbps/100 Mbps, Higher speeds available upon request	1 year	\$200	\$10.92/mo.	Remainder of 1 year contract
<b>SATELLITE</b>								
<b>HughesNet</b>	All 16 counties	1 Mbps	\$49.99	2 Mbps, 5 Mbps, 10 Mbps, 15 Mbps	24 mos.	Up to \$200	\$9.99/mo.	Cancel before installation: Refunded amount charged at time of order / Cancel after installation but before end of 24 month commitment: Up to \$400
<b>WIRELESS</b>								
<b>Aroostook Technologies</b>	Aroostook	1 Mbps/512 Kbps	\$39.95	2.5 Mbps/1.5 Mbps	12 mos.	\$139	\$0	\$250
<b>Axiom Technologies</b>	Washington	1.5-3 Mbps/768 Kbps	\$39.99	3 Mbps, 5 Mbps, 10 Mbps, 15 Mbps, 20 Mbps, more in select areas	12 mos.	\$99	\$0	\$250
<b>Bluestreak</b>	Parts of Waldo	3 Mbps/1 Mbps	\$29.95	5 Mbps/1 Mbps, 5 Mbps/5 Mbps, 10 Mbps/1 Mbps, 10 Mbps/2 Mbps, 10 Mbps/10 Mbps, 15 Mbps/15 Mbps, Higher speeds available upon request	N/A	\$99 (Varies by installation)	\$0	\$0
<b>GWI</b>	Knox, Waldo, Lincoln	3 Mbps/2 Mbps	\$40	Up to 10 Mbps/3 Mbps	N/A	\$99.95	\$63	\$0
<b>North Country Broadband</b>	Piscataquis	1.5 Mbps/368 Kbps	\$44.95	3 Mbps/768 Kbps 5 Mbps/768 Kbps	12 Active mos.	\$199.95	\$0	\$250
<b>Premium Choice Broadband</b>	Piscataquis, Hancock, Penobscot, Somerset, Waldo	1.5 Mbps/384 Kbps	\$49.95	384 Kbps/256 Kbps, 768 Kbps/256 Kbps, 3 Mbps/768 Kbps, 5 Mbps/768 Kbps	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
<b>Redzone Wireless, LLC</b>	All 16 counties	5 Mbps/1 Mbps	\$39	10 Mbps, 25 Mbps	N/A	\$75	\$0	\$0



# TELEPHONE

## COMPARING TELEPHONE RATES

For today's telephone customers, what was once a simple bottom-line comparison – i.e., comparing one carrier's rates to the rates of another – has now become a much more challenging task. In recent years, the FCC regulations involving long-distance service and toll carriers have been relaxed. Toll carriers can now add charges without much oversight.

Some carriers may include fees or charges that are not included in their advertised prices. Often these charges are difficult to identify before a customer signs up.

When considering local telephone and long-distance services, we recommend asking each carrier for the actual bill total prior to signing up.

The total that you ask for should include all taxes, surcharges, and fees associated with the carrier's various plans. The rates shown in the charts on pages 11, 13 and 14 are the base rates for service and do not include any additional taxes or fees which is why it is important to ask for this information. If a carrier can't or won't provide this information, it's a good sign you should take your business elsewhere.

### 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? (see page 15)	■	▲	▲	▲
Service contract required	▲	▲	■	▲
White page listing	■	●	■	●
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.

# PLAIN OLD TELEPHONE SERVICE

As you can see from the many charts and tables in this guide, there are a whole lot of communication choices these days. Still, many households in Maine continue to rely on traditional telephone service, which 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 the copper wires owned by your local telephone company, which conduct electrical current to support the service even during most electrical power outages.

The charts below 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. These prices should be compared to the offerings of your local telephone company (page 12), bundled plans offered by telephone and cable providers (page 13), and with wireless-based home phone services (page 22).

## Standalone Long-Distance Service

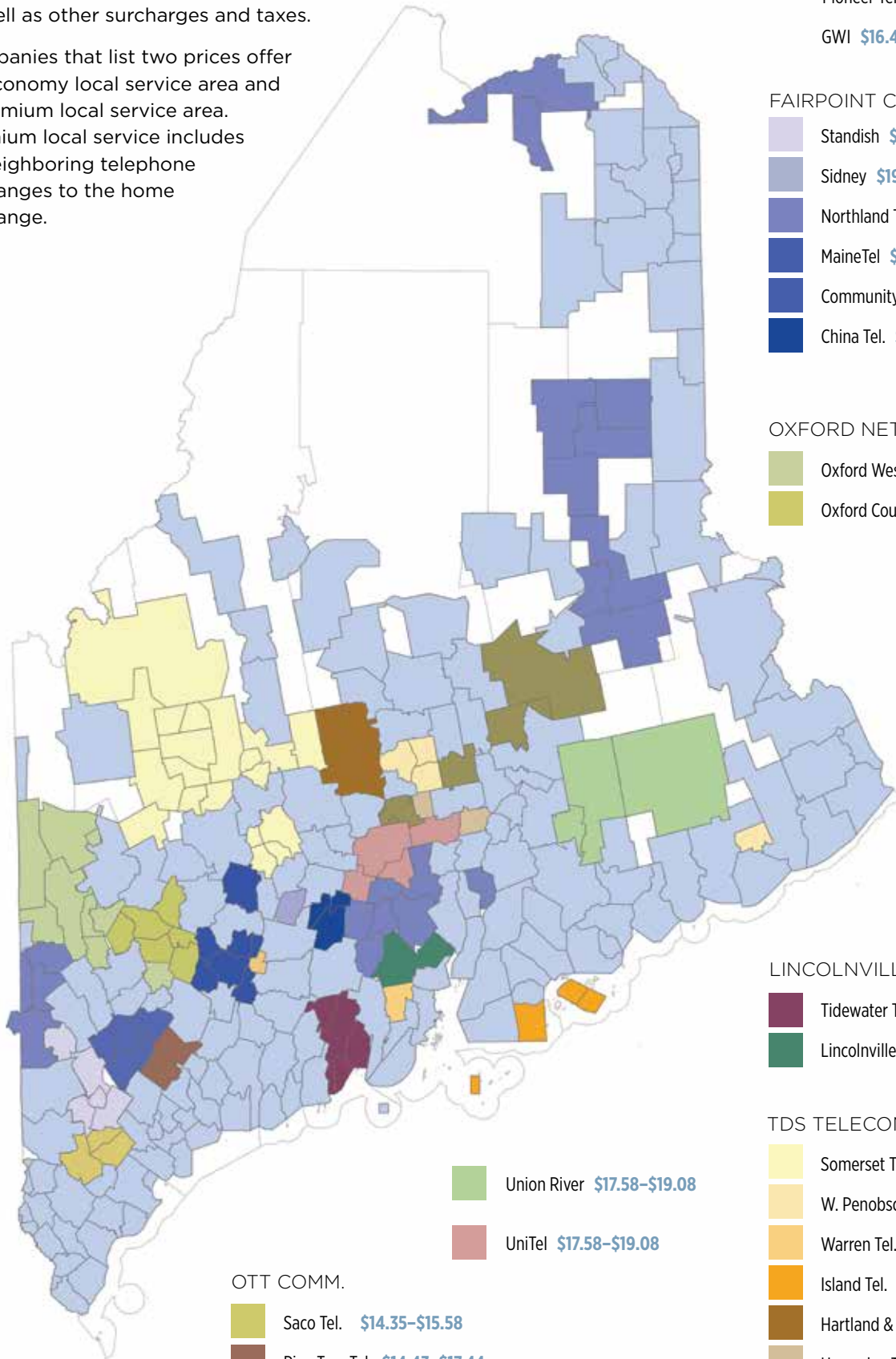
- 6 second billing — billed for 1/10 (.1) of a minute for every 6 seconds the call lasts. For a 2 minute and 1 second call, you would get billed for 2.1 minutes instead of 3 minutes. With 6 second billing, you can save an average of 5-15% per call based upon the call length over full minute billing.

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>• Pioneer is a Maine company</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> </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. expire 6 mos. from activation, last recharge, or usage</li> <li>• Voicemail via email attachment</li> </ul>

# 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.



- FairPoint NNE **\$16.69**
- Pioneer Telephone **\$25**
- GWI **\$16.45**

**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 **\$16.63-\$19.72**

**LINCOLNVILLE TEL. CO.**

- Tidewater Telecom **\$17.79-\$19.29**
- Lincolnville 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**
- Cobbosseecontee Tel. **\$17.58**

**OTT COMM.**

- Saco Tel. **\$14.35-\$15.58**
- Pine Tree Tel. **\$14.43-\$17.44**
- Mid-Maine Comm. **\$17.79-\$19.29**

■ Union River **\$17.58-\$19.08**

■ UniTel **\$17.58-\$19.08**

Map courtesy of the Maine Public Utilities Commission

# BUNDLING PHONE AND INTERNET SERVICE

Your local telephone company and some competitors may offer local and long distance telephone service with internet for residential customers for one price as a so-called “bundled service.” For some customers, the bundled price may be lower than separately purchasing each individual service, and some appreciate the convenience of paying for multiple services on a single bill. Bundled services are not subject to rate regulation, so rates are sometimes negotia-

ble. To test the bundle price, it often pays to bargain with each company separately and learn the best price for each individual service outside of a bundle, and then consider whether you need all of the services offered by a bundle. When comparing advertised prices for bundled services, keep in mind that telephone companies almost always add the subscriber line charge rate (\$6.14 to \$6.50), an access recovery charge rate (ARC — up to \$1 this year, i.e., 2015), plus regulatory

surcharges, all of which are normally not included in advertised prices. If you purchase bundled service, it pays to call your provider periodically and ask for a lower rate from time to time. Many customers are able to get price breaks when they request them. As with any service, it is worth following your rates if you sign up on a promotional offer as the cost may change dramatically when the promotional period ends.

## Bundled Plans: Residential (Local, Long-Distance, and DSL)

- All plans include unlimited calling to US and Canada
- All plans include voicemail, call-waiting, and caller ID features
- Additional features available

Service over Phone Network | Has battery back-up  
 Service over Cable Network

COMPANY	UNLIMITED LOCAL AND NATIONWIDE LONG DISTANCE	UNLIMITED LOCAL AND INSTATE LONG DISTANCE	DSL & UNLIMITED LOCAL & NATIONWIDE LONG DISTANCE	NOTES
<b>Comcast</b>	\$40	\$35 (5¢ long-distance)	\$80 Up to 25 Mbps	1
<b>FairPoint</b>	\$24.99 1 year	\$34.70 month-to-month	\$61.28 Up to 15 Mbps	2
<b>GWI</b>	\$39.95	\$31.00	\$74.45 Up to 20 Mbps	3
<b>Metrocast Online</b>	\$45	N/A	\$71.95 Up to 25 Mbps	4
<b>OTT</b>	\$38.45	\$29.95	\$50.45–\$83.45 3 Mbps–12 Mbps	5
<b>Oxford Networks</b>	\$50 (\$43 without features)	N/A	\$81 Up to 5 Mbps (includes 5 calling features)	6
<b>Time Warner Cable</b>	\$40	\$30 (5¢ long-distance)	\$80 15 Mbps	7

NOTES

- 1 Available in Sagadahoc, York, Cumberland, Androscoggin Counties | 12 month introductory bundle rates available
- 2 Available across ME | Unlimited calling to Puerto Rico, Guam & US Virgin Islands
- 3 Available across ME | \$5 extra w/features include voicemail
- 4 Available in Berwick, Sanford and Springvale
- 5 Available in Penobscot, York, Cumberland and Knox Counties | 1-yr. contract required | \$75 early termination fee
- 6 Available in Androscoggin & Oxford Counties
- 7 Available across ME | 12 month introductory bundle rates available | 13 Free Calling Features | Unlimited calling to Puerto Rico, Mexico, Guam & US Virgin Islands

# LIFELINE PROGRAMS

LifeLine Programs are federal programs that provide eligible Maine residents with low cost telephone installation and service. LifeLine helps with the ongoing cost of telephone service by offering up to a \$13.50 per month discount on phone service.

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 meet the criteria listed above or qualify for certain tribal assistance programs.

Qualified individuals can choose between a discounted landline at their

residence or a prepaid cell phone. However, only one lifeline account is allowed per address. Participants must re-certify 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 chart below. 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.

## Wireless LifeLine Phone Providers

COMPANY	SERVICE AREA	FREE PHONE	FREE MINUTES PER MO.	FREE TEXT PER MO.
<b>Assurance Wireless (Virgin Mobile)</b>	South of Gardiner	✓	250 / add'l mins. 10¢	Unlimited
<b>Budget Mobile Lifeline</b>	Statewide	✓	250	250
<b>Cintex (Liberty Wireless)</b>	South of Bangor	Bring your own phone	100	Unlimited
<b>Safelink Wireless (Tracfone)</b>	Statewide	✓	250	Unlimited
<b>YourTel (TerraCom Wireless)</b>	Statewide	✓	250	text messaging @ 1 min. per text message
<b>Life Wireless</b>	Statewide	✓	250	1/3 min. per text messaging
<b>Qlink</b>	Statewide	✓	250	250

# PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES

Being informed and prepared can prevent a lot of stress when an emergency arises. Throughout this publication there are references to E911 and battery back-up systems, both of which are important emergency communication tools. Here we take a look at the details of these systems.

## 911 vs. E911

The universal emergency number for all telephone services in the United States is 911. While the 911 system is very effective at connecting callers with local law enforcement, it does little more than connect the call. Enhanced 911, or E911, not only connects the caller to a dispatch center; it automatically sends the caller's location and phone number as well. Cellular phone providers are required by the FCC to comply with E911 services. The requirements for VOIP services are not as clear cut. VOIP calls must work with the 911 system, but only VOIP systems that allow you to make and receive calls from a regular phone number are required to be compatible with E911. With cable, VOIP and wireless service, it is important to keep the providing company apprised of any change in address so that emergency personnel receive the correct address information along with an emergency call. VOIP providers are required to inform all subscribers of the limitations of the VOIP subscription when connecting to 911 and E911 services.

## USING THE PHONE IN A POWER OUTAGE

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 when 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.

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, if one is available with that carrier.

For these systems, making sure that you have phone service during a power outage may require more preparation. Prior to an emergency, it is important that you know if your phone system is equipped with a battery back-up, where that battery is located, and if you need to turn this back-up on in the event of a power outage. It is also important to test the back-up system regularly during fair weather, so that you can check the system and contact your provider if an issue is discovered. If the outage may last for a number of days, consider disconnecting the battery back-up system when you do not need to make calls. This will preserve the battery life and help ensure that emergency personnel can be contacted if needed. It may also be wise 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. For wireless phones, a car charger may allow you to charge your phone when power is out in your home.





# TELEPHONE SCAMS ON THE RISE

Over the past year, people across Maine have reached out to AARP, police stations, the Office of the Public Advocate, and local Community Action Programs (CAPs) reporting a new wave of telephone scams. One mid-coast resident contacted our office to report a call that claimed her computer had been infected by a virus. She was told that if she gave the caller her credit-card information and her email account, they could log in and fix the computer problem for her. Another resident reported receiving calls from a grandchild asking for money, but the incoming phone number wasn't familiar. In these cases and many others, these scammers are looking to gain access to your personal information, including your Social Security number, credit-card information, or bank account numbers.

- Please be aware that scammers are sophisticated. Their scams are always changing. So simply blocking their phone number won't help.

Here are some tips to avoid being scammed:

- Do not give your personal or financial information out to anyone over the phone.
- If you receive a call from a company with whom you have an account and if the caller asks for financial information, it is often best to end that call and call the company back on its published customer service line. This will allow you to verify that the company's need is legitimate.
- Ask the caller to send you written material. This will allow you more time to review the request from the caller and determine whether you feel it is legitimate or not.
- If you receive a phone call that you believe to be part of a scam, please contact the Maine Attorney General's office at 207-626-8800. This will help get the word out to others.

## WHITE PAGE DIRECTORIES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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



# VOIP

## THE BASICS OF VOIP

“Voice Over Internet Protocol” (VOIP) is a general term covering 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 the phone 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 with most communications technology, things are changing fast and the lines between VOIP and traditional phone service are blurring. We now include the VOIP service offered by cable providers on the bundled plans chart, though unlike traditional telephone service, it does not offer a powered line.

The chart in this section compares computer-based VOIP services and services that require a phone adapter.

### COMPUTER-BASED VOIP SERVICE

At their most basic, these services allow you to make and receive phone calls via your computer. Many computer-based services offer apps that can be used with your cell phone or tablet in addition to their online services. The majority of computer-based providers include free calls to other computers 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 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 home or while traveling. Before contacting companies to compare costs and services for a subscription, create a list of the services you want included as well as the states and countries you contact frequently.

Depending on the service you choose, 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 simply needs a telephone with which to answer the call.

# Residential VOIP Services and Plans

## COMPUTER BASED SERVICES

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

	FREE TO USERS OF SAME PROVIDER	PRICE	NOTES
<b>Skype</b>	✓	\$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>
<b>Google Voice</b>	✓	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>
<b>Onesuite</b>	✓	\$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

	FREE TO USERS OF SAME PROVIDER	PRICE	NOTES
<b>Net2Phone</b>		\$24/mo.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contract is on a month-to-month basis</li> <li>• Keep your phone number</li> <li>• Telephone adapter included</li> <li>• No activation fee</li> </ul>
<b>Ooma</b>		\$5/mo. includes 200 minutes to over 60 countries International calls as low as 3¢/min.	<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 \$130</li> </ul>
<b>Vonage</b>	✓	\$10/mo. for the first year with 1 year agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No activation fee</li> <li>• Telephone adapter included</li> <li>• 1-year agreement required</li> </ul>
<b>Basic Talk</b>		\$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>
<b>MagicJack</b>	✓	\$5/1 mo. plan \$20/6 mo. plan \$35/ 12 mo. plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone adapter included</li> <li>• \$10 to keep your phone number</li> </ul>

# WIRELESS

## CELL PHONE OVERVIEW

Choosing the best cell phone provider and plan can be tricky business. The charts in the pages that follow are intended to help compare the different options available. The best way to begin is by understanding what you want out of your cell phone. If you use a smart phone and frequently access the internet, it might be wise to compare based on the data plans. If you make calls infrequently or only in an emergency, a prepaid plan may be the best option. As always, coverage matters: you'll need to make sure you will be able to make calls in places where you are going to be using your cell phone.

### 3G VERSUS 4G

While you have likely seen the commercials comparing cell phone service maps and provider speeds, very few if any commercials actually define the mysterious terms they reference repeatedly. The two most common terms tossed around in the commercials are 3G and 4G. The "G" stands for generation. While it wasn't widely published, the first analog cell phones were 1G and the next evolution brought in the 2G. Third generation, so-called "3G" networks can provide download speeds up to 4 Mbps.

Unfortunately, when it comes to 4G, things are not as clear cut. The term has not been uniformly used in the telephone industry and many technologies use the term. The basic premise is that 4G is supposed to be faster than 3G and that 4G LTE (long-term evolution) should have the fastest

download speeds. In June 2014, PC-Mag.com performed a network speed test in 30 cities nationwide and found that on speed alone, Verizon 4G LTE network was the fastest, followed by T-Mobile 4G LTE, AT&T 4G LTE, and Sprint 4G LTE.

### COVERAGE

So, now that you know 4G is faster and which networks are fastest, the decision should be made, right? Not so fast! One of the main points to consider when selecting a phone should still be the carrier with the best coverage in your area. Also, if the majority of your phone usage is still for voice calls, a 3G phone without a high speed network connection may save you money and battery life.

### CONTRACTS VERSUS NO-CONTRACT CARRIERS

What was once convention — signing up with a cell phone service provider for a multi-year contract — is now optional. There are advantages to long-term contracts. Some contracts allow customers to spread the price of the phone out over the course of the contract. Others have phones available for free on promotional deals. The disadvantage is that customers are bound to one carrier and are obligated to pay through the end of the contract.

A no-contract carrier may be a better option for some customers. With a no-contract service, customers have the freedom to switch from one

provider to another if the customer moves or takes an extended trip to an area better served by another provider. Monthly access charges can be significantly lower. Downsides include having to pay more upfront for a phone, as the provider is not subsidizing the cost over the length of the contract. The tables on the next page list the larger service providers offering no-contract plans at this time in Maine. Many no-contract carriers use the networks of major carriers. For example, Consumer Cellular focuses on serving the senior market and offers coverage through the AT&T network.

For more detailed information, including service maps and carrier comparison charts, visit [www.rootmetrics.com/us](http://www.rootmetrics.com/us)

### STAY UP TO DATE ON YOUR DATA PLAN

In February 2015, Verizon announced that it has reduced most of its current data plans by \$10 per month and added a wider range of data plan options. But existing customer's bills won't automatically go down: they will need to contact Verizon to take advantage of new pricing. Once you review your bill and data plan subscription, contact Verizon at (800) 922-0204 or dial \*611 from your mobile phone to speak to a representative about new pricing options.

# Monthly Fee Wireless Plans

	MAJOR CARRIERS						RESELLERS (USES FACILITIES OF OTHER CARRIERS)		
	AT&T		T MOBILE		US CELLULAR	VERIZON	CONSUMER CELLULAR	PURE TALKUSA	STRAIGHTTALK
	2 Yr Contract		No Contract		2 Yr Contract	2 Yr Contract	No Contract	No Contract	No Contract
	Individual	Family	Individual	Family	Share Data	Individual/Single Line	Anywhere 3,500	Unlimited Plus	All You Need
<b>Monthly Fee</b>	\$40	\$60	\$50	\$50	\$40	\$60	\$40	\$34.95	\$45
<b>Plan Minutes</b>	Unlimited		Unlimited		Unlimited	Unlimited	3,500 (25¢/additional min)	Unlimited	Unlimited
<b>Text messaging</b>	Unlimited		Unlimited		Unlimited	Unlimited	None Included	Unlimited	Unlimited
<b>Included Data</b>	3 GB	10 GB	1 GB		300 MB	1 GB	None Included	500 MB	100 MB
<b>Additional Data Cost</b>	300 MB — \$20		1 GB — \$20		1 GB — \$30	1 GB — \$30	Text and Data Plans: \$2.50 — 300 text + 30 MB \$5 — 1,500 text + 150 MB \$10 — 3,000 text + 500 MB \$20 — Unlimited + 1.5 GB \$30 — Unlimited + 3 GB \$40 — Unlimited + 4 GB	N/A	N/A
	1 GB — \$25		3 GB — \$30		2 GB — \$50	2 GB — \$40			
	3 GB — \$40		5 GB — \$40		6 GB — \$60	3 GB — \$50			
	6 GB — \$70		7 GB — \$50		8 GB — \$80	4 GB — \$60			
	10 GB — \$100 & higher		9 GB — \$60 & higher		10 GB — \$100 & higher	7 GB — \$70 & higher			
<b>Cost of extra line</b>	\$40		N/A	\$30	30¢ (basic phone)	Unlimited	\$10	N/A	N/A
<b>Cost of calls to Canada (per min.)</b>	19¢		49¢		44¢	69¢	20¢	Varies based on carrier and landline	International Plan — \$60 Unlimited
<b>Termination Fee</b>	\$325		\$200		\$350	\$175–\$350	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Notes</b>	• \$30 “Senior Nation” plan with 200 min. and 500 off peak min., additional min. 45¢				• Free Overage Protection. • Life Line plans available		• 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	• Referral Program — \$10 credit • Voice Plans: \$5/mo. — 80 min. \$10/mo. — 250 min. \$20/mo. — 1000 min. • Text Messages are 1/3 of a min.	

## WHAT IS PROJECT FI?

In April of 2015, Google launched its ‘Project Fi’ wireless service, a new cell phone service that will compete with traditional major carriers. Unlike those carriers’ dedicated networks, Project Fi will allow users to move seamlessly between Sprint, T-Mobile and Wi-Fi networks to make calls and send data. According to Google, by switching between the best available networks, it will offer fast and reliable signal. One other key difference: you

will only pay for the data that you use. Plans start at \$20 for unlimited talk, text, and international roaming at no additional cost. Each gigabyte of data is \$10, but if you use less than you buy, you’ll get a credit back on your bill.

As with any new service, there are drawbacks and many unknowns. Project Fi 4G coverage in Maine is limited mostly to southern Maine and

major cities. Currently there is only one phone on the market that supports Project Fi, the \$600 Motorola Nexus 6. Because this project is still in the testing phase, only a limited number of people will be able to join the “Early Access Program” each week. Still, it is a sign that telecommunications services, technologies and business models are continuing to evolve.

# 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
<b>AT&amp;T — Go Phone</b>	\$45	1.5 GB	Yes
<b>Net10</b>	\$40	1.5 GB	No
<b>Straight Talk — Tracfone</b>	\$45	Unlimited	No
<b>T-Mobile</b>	\$40	1 GB	No
<b>US Cellular</b>	\$45	1 GB	No
<b>Verizon</b>	\$45	1 GB	No

## SEVEN WAYS TO SAVE MONEY ON YOUR CELL PHONE BILL

Cell phone bills can be one of the biggest monthly expenses, second to rent or mortgage payments. With this large financial commitment, it makes sense to review your plan to find ways to save money each month. Most cellular service providers show your talk, text and data usage on each monthly statement. Armed with your cell phone bill, follow these steps to look for ways to save.

**COMPARE YOUR USAGE TO YOUR PLAN** If you are going over your talk, text or data limits each month, it will cost you in overage charges. On the other hand, if you use significantly less than your plan allows, it may also be time to adjust your contract. Visit your service provider and talk to it about finding a plan that better suits your current usage needs. Customers who use more than 150 minutes per month should consider pre-paid monthly fee or regular monthly fee cellular plans.

**SURF ON WI-FI** If you are using a large amount of data, consider turn-

ing on your phone's Wi-Fi connection. This will allow your phone to access the internet for free when you are near a hot spot. The data you use on Wi-Fi doesn't count against your data plan.

**LIMIT APP UPDATES** Now that the phone is set to access Wi-Fi signals, change the application update option to update only when the phone is connected to a Wi-Fi network. The phone manual or tip guide should provide more detailed instructions on how to adjust these settings.

**REMOVE ADD-ONS** As technology evolves, there can be duplication of features. Review your bill for features that other devices or services might now cover. Roadside assistance and ringback tones are examples of features that you may be paying for but no longer need.

**NEGOTIATE** There is no downside to asking for a discount. Often companies are running promotions or will offer discounts to long-time customers.

**COMPARE** With cellular towers being added across Maine at a rapid rate, there may be an alternate provider with coverage as good or better in your area. Currently some companies are offering to buy out existing contracts at a much lower rate. Websites such as [www.whistleout.com](http://www.whistleout.com) can make the comparison process much easier.

**DITCH THE CONTRACT** Consider a pre-paid plan. Several options are listed in this guide to help you get acclimated with the options. There are plans for those who use their phones occasionally and for those who rely heavily on their phones.



## Pay As You Go Wireless Plans

NOTE: Customers who use more than 150 minutes per month should consider pre-paid monthly fee 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
<b>AT&amp;T Go Phone</b>	10¢	20¢	\$10	\$10-\$24: 30 days \$25-\$99: 90 days \$100+: 365 days	39¢
<b>T-Mobile</b>	10¢	10¢	\$3	30 days	49¢
<b>Tracfone</b>	10¢	1/3 airtime min. per text	\$10	No expiration	International plan needed
<b>Verizon Wireless</b>	25¢	20¢	\$5	\$5-\$29.99: 30 days \$30-\$74.99: 90 days \$75-\$99.99: 180 days \$100+: 365 days	International plan needed

## Wireless-Based Home Phone Service

- Unlimited calling within the US
- Equipment has battery back-up included, providing up to 3 hours of talk time and 24-36 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
<b>AT&amp;T Home Phone</b>	\$99	\$20	\$40	\$150
<b>Straight Talk Home Phone</b>	\$49	\$15	None	None
<b>Verizon Home Phone Connect</b>	\$99	\$20/mo.	\$35	\$175
<b>US Cellular Home Phone</b>	\$159	\$20/mo.	\$40	\$150

# 2015 Company Directory

**Aroostook Technologies**  
**Aroostooktechnologies.com**  
207-762-9321

**Assurance Wireless**  
**Assurancewireless.com**  
888-898-4888

**AT&T**  
**att.com**  
800-888-7600—Wireless  
800-467-4663—Go Phone  
800-331-0500—Home

**Axiom Technologies**  
**axiom-tech.net**  
866-708-7998

**Basic Talk**  
**basictalk.com**  
855-210-2823

**Bee Line Cable**  
**getbeeline.com**  
800-439-4600

**Bluestreak**  
**bluestreakme.com**  
877-338-9015

**Budget Mobile Lifeline**  
**Budgetmobile.com**  
888-777-4007

**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

**FairPoint NNE**  
**FairPoint Classics**  
**fairpoint.com**  
866-984-2001

**Google Voice**  
**Google.com/voice**

**GWI**  
**gwi.net**  
866-494-2020

**HughesNet**  
**hughesnet.com**  
888-648-2706

**Life Wireless**  
**Lifewireless.com**  
888-543-3620

**Lincolnvile Networks**  
**tidewater.net**  
207-763-9911

**Magic Jack**  
**magicjack.com**  
561-594-2140

**MaineStream Internet**  
**ccmaine.net**  
207-564-5000

**Metrocast**  
**metrocast.com**  
800-695-2545

**Net 10 (Tracfone)**  
**net10.com**  
877-836-3368

**Net2Phone**  
**voiceline.net2phone.com**  
800-455-4185

**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**  
**ottcommunications.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**

**Starband**  
**starband.com**  
800-478-2722

**Straight Talk**  
**straighttalk.com**  
877-430-2355

**TDS Telecom**  
**Tdstelecom.com**  
866-734-0704

**Tidewater Telecom**  
**tidewater.net**  
207-563-9911

**Time Warner Cable**  
**timewarnercable.com**  
800-833-2253

**T-Mobile**  
**tmobile.com**  
800-866-2453

**Tracfone**  
**tracfone.com**  
800-867-7183

**Union River**  
**rivah.net**  
207-584-9911

**UniTel**  
**unitelme.com**  
207-948-3900

**US Cellular**  
**uscellular.com**  
888-944-9400

**Verizon**  
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**vonage.com**  
855-896-9029

**WildBlue**  
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**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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