

# Michigan Public Service Commission

## Discontinuance of Landline Service in Michigan – Frequently Asked Questions – January 11, 2017

### **1. Q: What will happen to my landline service beginning in 2017?**

A: By law, a phone company cannot automatically discontinue providing landline service in an exchange without following certain state and federal requirements to allow it to do so. The Michigan Telecommunications Act (MTA) is the Michigan law which lays out the terms under which a provider of landline service in Michigan can discontinue providing its service. An amendment to the law in 2014 relaxed some of the requirements that allow for a provider of basic local exchange service (landline service) to discontinue that service in Michigan. Beginning January 1, 2017, Section 313 of the MTA will allow telephone companies to discontinue providing basic local exchange service by applying to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for approval to discontinue service under the Federal Telecommunications Act and after providing notice to affected customers, interconnecting providers, and the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC). The amendment to Section 313 also includes a requirement that any provider that discontinues service after 2016 must adhere to further federal regulations for discontinuing service. These regulations address consumer protection, access to emergency services, competition, and universal availability of service.

### **2. Q: What rights do customers and/or interconnecting carriers have?**

A: Section 313 allows a customer or interconnecting carrier of a provider that is proposing to discontinue service to request that the MPSC investigate the availability of “comparable voice service with reliable access to 9-1-1 and emergency services” for that customer or a customer of an interconnecting telecommunications provider. It also sets out the process for an MPSC investigation. If the investigation reveals a lack of availability of service, it allows the MPSC to conduct a request for service to identify a willing provider. If a willing provider cannot be identified, it allows the MPSC to require the existing provider to continue providing service until a willing provider is available. There are also federal notice requirements to customers and procedures that a provider must follow per the FCC in order to discontinue landline service or to replace it with an alternative service such as VoIP or wireless. The FCC has the authority to deny a provider’s request to discontinue offering landline service if a situation warrants it.

### **3. Q: Where is this happening?**

A: While Michigan and some other states’ discontinuance laws have been amended in recent years to accommodate new technologies, there are currently few requests across the country to discontinue landline service. The MPSC is not aware of any incumbent local exchange carriers

(ILECs) that are currently exercising the option to completely abandon landline service without some form of replacement service being offered under the watchful eye of the FCC and/or state commissions.

**4. Q: What can I do?**

A: If you receive a notice from your provider that it intends to discontinue offering landline service in your exchange and there is no alternative replacement available, you may contact the MPSC to request that it investigate the availability of a comparable voice service provider with reliable access to 9-1-1 and emergency services. You will also be able to contact the FCC to voice your concerns about lack of availability of service as well.

**5. Q: How do I find another carrier?**

A: The letter that you received from your carrier may identify alternative phone service providers in your area. The MPSC through its partnership with Connect Michigan has also developed maps and a database of providers in Michigan that provide service. Please visit: <http://www.connectmi.org/interactive-map>

**6. Q: What if I can't get service from any other company?**

A: Contact the MPSC and the FCC as soon as possible to express your concerns.

**7. Q: Can I keep my old phone number when I find a new provider?**

A: Yes, in most cases. The FCC's number portability rules still apply in discontinuances.

**8. Q: Where can I find additional information about discontinuance of landline service?**

- Link to the MPSC's website explaining the changes to Section 313: [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mpsc/MTAsummary\\_453136\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mpsc/MTAsummary_453136_7.pdf)
- Link to the MTA – please see Section 313: [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(imcyg5aqyyxa0dj1xi4atodu\)\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-179-of-1991.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(imcyg5aqyyxa0dj1xi4atodu))/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-179-of-1991.pdf)
- The FCC's page on Federal Discontinuance of Service Requirements: <https://www.fcc.gov/general/domestic-section-214-discontinuance-service>

**9. Q: What if I have other questions about the discontinuance?**

A: If you have additional questions, please contact the Michigan Public Service Commission at 1-800-292-9555 and/or the Federal Communications Commission at 1-888-CALL-FCC or visit the MPSC and FCC websites at [www.michigan.gov/mpsc](http://www.michigan.gov/mpsc) or [www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov).

**10. Q: Where can I find additional information if a carrier wishes to replace my landline service with an alternative voice service using broadband or other technology?**

A: Please view the following links on the FCC's website for further information:

**FCC Consumer Information** -

<http://transition.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/tech-transitions.pdf>

<https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/tech-transitions-network-upgrades-may-affect-your-service>

**11. Q: What if I receive notice that my provider intends to replace my landline service with an alternative service using a new technology and I have concerns that it may not be compatible with other devices in my house such as fax machines, home alarm systems, or medical monitoring devices?**

A: While the existing services and rates that you are currently charged should not change, if you have concerns about whether your existing devices that rely on landline technology will continue to work if your service is transitioned to a service provided by a new technology, first please contact your provider with any questions. If the answers that they have provided to you do not alleviate your concerns, please contact the MPSC and the FCC.

**12. Will telephone service provided through broadband or wireless continue to work during a power outage?**

A: Unlike landline telephone service, telephone service provided through broadband or wireless requires battery backup power in order to work during a power outage. The FCC requires that your provider notify you of this change in your service and to offer you the opportunity to purchase a battery backup for your phone for an additional charge. Batteries can also be purchased through other retailers.