

fuse

The analogue switch-off, explained properly

A plain English guide for anyone who owns, manages or occupies a commercial building.

What is changing, what it affects, and what to do about it.

Start here: the one thing to understand

The emergency button in a lift is a phone.

Press it and it dials out, over an ordinary copper phone line, to whoever answers lift alarms for that building. It is not a special safety system with its own magic connection. It is a telephone.

The same is true of a lot of equipment in a commercial building. The fire alarm panel uses a phone line to tell its monitoring centre something is wrong. The intruder alarm does the same. The door entry panel rings a phone. An old CCTV recorder dials out to report a fault. There is often something in a plant room that nobody has looked at in fifteen years quietly doing the same.

All of it depends on the copper telephone network. And that network is being switched off.

If you only read one page

Copper phone lines are being retired across the UK and switched off completely on 31 January 2027. Desk phones have mostly been moved across already. The problem is everything else that quietly used a phone line and was never thought of as a telephone. When those lines go, that equipment stops working, and almost none of it will tell you it has stopped.

1. What is actually happening

The UK telephone network has run on copper wires for well over a century. The technology behind it, usually called PSTN, is old, increasingly hard to maintain, and being replaced with a system that carries calls over an internet connection instead.

This is not a government decision or a new regulation. It is the industry retiring equipment that has reached the end of its working life, in the same way analogue television was switched off and replaced with digital.

The important word is retired. The copper network is not being upgraded or improved. It is being switched off. Anything still relying on it after that date does not get a worse service. It gets no service.

The dates that matter

When	What happens
Since 2023	Stop sell. New analogue phone lines can no longer be ordered anywhere in the UK, and existing ones cannot generally be moved or amended.
Now to Jan 2027	Migration period. Lines are being moved across to the new network, and prices on the remaining analogue lines rise.
31 January 2027	Switch-off. The analogue network is turned off. Anything still on it stops working.

The date has moved once already, from December 2025, to give more time for exactly the equipment this guide is about. It would be unwise to plan on it moving again.

2. Why this gets missed

Almost every business has dealt with its telephones. Somebody from IT or a telecoms provider came in, the desk phones changed, and the job felt finished.

It was not finished, because a building contains a lot of things that use a phone line without being a phone. Nobody filed them under telephones, so nobody checked them.

There is a second reason, and it is the more awkward one. No single person is responsible for the whole list:

- **The lift maintenance company** looks after the lift, including the alarm inside it, but not the phone line the alarm uses.
- **The alarm company** looks after the panel and the monitoring, but not the line into it.
- **The telecoms provider** is responsible for the line, but has no idea what is plugged into the other end of it.
- **The landlord or managing agent** is responsible for the building, and is usually the only party with an interest in the complete picture.

Everybody is doing their own job properly. The gap is between them.

3. What is likely to be affected

This is the list worth walking round your building with. Not everything applies to every property, and the older the building, the longer the list tends to be.

Equipment	What it does	What happens when the line goes
Lift emergency phone	Lets somebody trapped in a lift speak to a person	Nobody can raise the alarm from inside the lift. The lift itself keeps running normally.

Equipment	What it does	What happens when the line goes
Fire alarm signalling	Tells a monitoring centre the alarm has gone off	The panel still sounds in the building, but nobody outside is told. The building relies on somebody calling 999.
Intruder alarm signalling	Reports a break-in to a monitoring centre	The siren still sounds. Nobody is notified.
Door entry and intercoms	Lets a visitor call a tenant or a phone	Visitors, deliveries and contractors cannot get in or be let in.
Gate and barrier intercoms	The same, at a vehicle entrance	Vehicles cannot be admitted remotely.
CCTV or BMS diallers	Older systems that phone out to report faults	Faults go unreported. Recording usually continues locally.
Telecare and personal alarms	Lets a vulnerable person call for help	The call for help does not connect. This is the most serious item on any list.
Card payment terminals	Takes card payments over a phone line	Payments stop.
Fax and franking machines	Sends faxes, buys postage	Stops working. Usually better retired than replaced.

The thing that makes this different from most deadlines

None of this equipment tells you it has stopped. There is no alert, no fault light, and no change to the invoice. A lift emergency phone that no longer works looks exactly like one that does. The first anybody knows is when somebody needs it, and by then it is the worst possible moment to find out.

4. What replaces it

There are three practical routes, and different equipment in the same building will take different ones.

Over the building's internet connection

The device is connected to the building's broadband or fibre instead of a phone line. Suitable where there is a reliable connection and the device can be adapted. The catch is that if the internet goes down or the power fails, so does the device, which matters a great deal for a lift alarm.

Over the mobile network

The device gets its own small router with a SIM card in it, and connects over 4G or 5G. Widely used for lift phones and alarm signalling because it does not depend on the building's own internet, and because the equipment can carry a battery so it keeps working in a power cut. Signal at the exact position of the device needs checking, since a lift motor room is usually the worst spot in the building.

Retire it

Some of what turns up does not need replacing at all. A fax line or a franking machine can often simply be ceased, which saves the line rental as well.

One thing worth asking about

If equipment is moved onto the mobile network, ask whether it will sit on the public internet or on a private network. Devices such as door entry, access control and cameras that are directly reachable from the internet have to be very carefully secured. Keeping them on a private, closed connection avoids the problem rather than defending against it.

5. Who is responsible for what

This is the question that decides how long the job takes, and it is worth answering early.

Question	Why it matters
Who owns the device?	The landlord, a tenant, or a third party. Determines who pays and who instructs.
Who does it report to?	A different question. A lift phone may report to a lift company, a fire alarm to an alarm receiving centre, a card terminal to a payment provider. Whoever receives the signal usually has to be involved in changing it.
Who holds the maintenance contract?	Many devices can only be reconfigured by the company that maintains them. Their availability, not yours, sets the pace.
Who pays for the line today?	Sometimes nobody can answer this, which is itself a useful finding.

Devices that report to somebody else are not a reason to ignore them. They still belong on the list, because the building needs the complete picture even where the fix is not yours to make.

6. What to do, in order

- **One.** Find out what you have. Walk the building or have somebody do it properly: lift motor room, plant room, comms cupboard, riser, reception, and each tenant's space. Write down every device, where it is, and what it is connected to.
- **Two.** Work out which ones are life safety. Lift alarms, fire alarm signalling and telecare come first. Everything else can wait behind them.

- **Three.** Identify who has to be involved for each one. Ring the maintenance and monitoring companies early, because their diaries fill up as the deadline approaches.
- **Four.** Agree a replacement route for each device, and a date. Some will be straightforward. Some will need a survey of the signal or the cabling.
- **Five.** Do the work, test each device, and keep the record. Being able to show what was done, when, and by whom is worth having.

On timing

Handled now, this is a tidy piece of planned work. Left until January 2027, it becomes an emergency competing with everybody else's emergency, at a point when engineers and monitoring companies are fully booked. The cost difference between those two situations is considerable.

7. Common questions

Will somebody tell me if I have lines that need moving?

Possibly, but not reliably, and not device by device. Your telecoms provider knows which lines exist. It does not know what is plugged into them. Nobody is going to send you a list of your lift phones.

Our building is modern. Does this still apply?

Often yes, though usually a shorter list. Lift emergency phones and alarm signalling are the two that turn up in buildings of almost any age.

What if the equipment is in a tenant's space?

It is usually theirs to deal with, but it is still in your building. Telling them is worth doing, both because it is helpful and because a card terminal that stops working on 1 February 2027 becomes a conversation with you anyway.

Is there a safety or legal requirement here?

Lift emergency alarm systems are covered by standards that require them to work and to keep working during a power failure. Fire alarm signalling arrangements are usually written into an insurance policy or a monitoring contract. Rather than relying on a general guide, ask your lift maintenance provider and your insurer what your specific obligations are.

Can I just leave the ones that are not life safety?

You can, as long as it is a decision rather than an oversight. The point of the list is to make it a decision.

How long does the work take?

The survey is a morning for most buildings. The replacement work depends on how many devices there are and how quickly the third parties can attend, which is nearly always the slowest part.

8. Jargon, translated

Every one of these turns up in quotes and emails about the switch-off. Here is what the letters actually stand for, and what each one means in practice.

The network being switched off

Term	Stands for	What it means
PSTN	Public Switched Telephone Network	The old copper telephone network. The thing being switched off on 31/01/2027.
ISDN	Integrated Services Digital Network	An older business phone system that ran several lines over one connection. Also being switched off.
WLR	Wholesale Line Rental	The product name for renting an analogue line. Being withdrawn with the network.
POTS	Plain Old Telephone Service	Industry slang for an ordinary analogue phone line. The same thing as PSTN in everyday use.
Analogue line	Not an acronym	An ordinary phone line. What most of the equipment in this guide is connected to.
Stop sell	Not an acronym	The point at which new analogue lines could no longer be ordered. Already in force UK-wide.

What replaces it

Term	Stands for	What it means
VoIP	Voice over Internet Protocol	Phone calls carried over an internet connection instead of copper wires.
SIP	Session Initiation Protocol	The technical method used to set up a VoIP call. You will see it in quotes as SIP trunks or SIP channels.
IP	Internet Protocol	The addressing system the internet uses. An IP device is one that connects over a network rather than a phone line.
ADSL	Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line	Older broadband delivered over the same copper as a phone line. Being retired alongside it.
FTTC	Fibre To The Cabinet	Fibre to the green street cabinet, then copper for the last stretch to the building.
FTTP	Fibre To The Premises	Fibre all the way into the building. The end position for most properties.
SOGEA	Single Order Generic	Broadband with no phone line attached.

Term	Stands for	What it means
	Ethernet Access	Often what an analogue line is replaced with.
Leased line	Not an acronym	A dedicated, guaranteed connection into a building, not shared with anyone else.

Equipment and connections

Term	Stands for	What it means
ATA	Analogue Telephone Adapter	A small box that lets existing analogue equipment plug into a modern connection, so the device itself does not need replacing.
SIM	Subscriber Identity Module	The same sort of card as in a mobile phone. Used to connect equipment over the mobile network.
M2M	Machine to Machine	A SIM designed for equipment rather than people. Low data, long life, managed remotely.
APN	Access Point Name	The route a SIM takes out of the mobile network. A private APN keeps a device off the public internet entirely.
VPN	Virtual Private Network	An encrypted connection across the internet, used so engineers can reach equipment securely.
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications	The mobile network. Older alarm equipment often refers to a GSM backup path.
Router	Not an acronym	The box that connects equipment to a network, whether by fibre, broadband or a SIM.

Alarms and monitoring

Term	Stands for	What it means
ARC	Alarm Receiving Centre	The company that answers when your fire or intruder alarm signals. They usually have to be involved in any change.
Dual path	Not an acronym	An alarm that signals two different ways, so if one fails the other still gets through.

Term	Stands for	What it means
Signalling path	Not an acronym	The route an alarm uses to reach its monitoring centre. This is the bit affected by the switch-off, not the alarm itself.
EN 81-28	A European standard	The standard covering remote alarms in lifts. Your lift maintenance provider will know how it applies to your equipment.
Telecare	Not an acronym	Personal alarms used by vulnerable people to call for help. The most safety-critical item on most lists.
BMS	Building Management System	The system controlling heating, ventilation and plant. Older ones dial out to report faults.

Where Fuse comes into it

We survey commercial buildings, list every device that depends on an analogue line, record who owns each one and what happens when the line is withdrawn, and set out what we recommend. Where the work is ours to do, we do it and keep the connection managed and monitored afterwards. Where it belongs to somebody else, we say so and coordinate.

We will survey the first building free. One survey, one written report, no obligation and nothing to sign. If your building turns out to be in good shape, we will tell you that rather than making work out of it.

You can also add your buildings to the free online check at fusecorp.co.uk/switchoff, which gives an indicative picture in a couple of minutes based on the type and age of the property.

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This guide is general information, not legal, safety or engineering advice for any particular building. Obligations relating to lift alarms, fire alarm signalling and telecare depend on the equipment installed and the contracts in place. Confirm your own position with the relevant maintenance provider, monitoring company or insurer.