

End of 3G service: AT&T will shut down its 3G network Feb. 22. How will it affect you?

22 February 2022, by Brett Molina



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AT&T is about to take the first step toward the end of 3G service.

On Tuesday, the wireless carrier will shut down its 3G [network](#), which means multiple older smartphones and countless other devices will no longer work.

Verizon was the first to launch a 3G network in the U.S. in 2002, during a time when the BlackBerry was the top smartphone to own and we were five years away from the arrival of the iPhone.

Twenty years ago, consumers used their phones for basic tasks like checking email, sending text messages, and of course, for making [phone calls](#). But with smartphones, we do so much more: take

pictures, watch TV, play games, scroll through social media, and beyond.

The added features mean having [wireless networks](#) to support them, which is why AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile are shutting down 3G to make room for faster 5G networks.

Here's what you should know about how the 3G shutdown might affect you:

When will 3G shut down for AT&T?

AT&T's network will shut down Tuesday, Feb. 22.

Will 3G phones still work on 5G?

If you own a 3G phone or a phone that doesn't support HD Voice calls, then it will no longer make or receive calls or text messages, or use any services requiring wireless data. And those devices can't dial 911.

What other devices are affected by the end of 3G service?

The impact of 3G's retirement goes beyond older phones. The wireless network supports countless other devices such as e-book readers, vehicle SOS services, home alarms, medical alert devices and more.

When will T-Mobile end 3G? What are the Verizon 3G plans?

T-Mobile says it will retire the older 3G network acquired in the Sprint deal on March 31. It will shut down its own 3G network by July 1. Verizon said it plans to decommission its 3G network by Dec. 31, 2022.

How can I prepare for the end of 3G?

The Federal Communications Commission advises

visiting your wireless carrier to determine whether your phone is affected. AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile have details on which devices are impacted. Some devices might only require a software update to continue working once 3G is retired.

For other devices, check with the manufacturer to determine whether it requires a software update or an upgrade.

Another thing to consider: whether you have an older [phone](#) handy in case of emergency. Those phones won't be able to dial 911 if needed, so you should consider replacing them.

What is 5G?

It's the fifth-generation mobile network, which will help our smartphones and other connected devices run faster. On our smartphones, it means we can download, upload or stream video as well as upload or download photos more quickly.

"5G is designed to do a variety of things that can transform our lives, including giving us faster download speeds, low latency, and more capacity and connectivity for billions of devices," said semiconductor chip company Qualcomm in a post explaining 5G.

Some current smartphones already support 5G, including Apple's iPhone 12 and iPhone 13 lines, and Samsung's Galaxy smartphones.

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