GAGITECK INC.

Whitepaper

Retiring Copper Phone Lines: A POTS Replacement Guide for Buildings

How condo associations, property managers and businesses replace copper lines for fire alarms, elevators, alarms and fax without losing compliance

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Key takeaways

- Carriers are retiring copper networks, and plain old telephone service (POTS) lines are getting more expensive and slower to repair.
- Most buildings have more copper lines than anyone remembers: fire alarm, elevator, security, gate, fax and point-of-sale lines are common.
- Life-safety lines need replacements your fire marshal or other authority having jurisdiction will accept; fire alarm codes recognize cellular and IP communicators.
- Every replacement needs backup power and must be tested end to end, including calls to the monitoring center or elevator call station.
- Plan line by line, document everything, and keep the old line active until the new path is proven.

1 Why copper lines are going away

Telephone carriers have been retiring their copper networks in favor of fiber and wireless. Since 2019, regulatory changes have made it easier for carriers to stop offering some legacy copper services, and many have raised prices on the copper lines that remain.

For a building, that shows up as higher monthly bills, longer waits for repairs, and notices that a line will be discontinued. Lines that serve life-safety equipment cannot simply be cancelled, so the replacement has to be planned.

2 Step 1: Inventory every line

Walk the building with the phone bill in hand and match each billed number to the equipment it serves. Common uses include:

- Fire alarm control panel communicators (often two lines).
- Elevator emergency phones, one per cab or shared.
- Security and burglar alarm panels.
- Gate, door entry and callbox systems.
- Fax machines and fax-to-email lines.
- Point-of-sale terminals, ATMs and older dial-up devices.
- Pool, garage and emergency call stations.

Record the number, location, device, monitoring company and any contract for each line. Lines that nobody can identify are often unused and can be cancelled once confirmed.

3 Step 2: Know the rules for each line type

Fire alarm communications are governed by NFPA 72, the National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code, as adopted by your jurisdiction. Current editions recognize communication methods other than two copper lines, including cellular and IP communicators, and set requirements for supervision and secondary power. Your fire marshal or other authority having jurisdiction has the final say, so involve them before the change.

Elevator emergency communication is governed by ASME A17.1 and local elevator codes, which require reliable two-way communication from the cab. Elevator phones need a replacement that supports that, with backup power, and some jurisdictions require inspection after the change.

Security alarms, gates and fax lines are usually less regulated, but they still need to work during a power or internet outage if the building relies on them.

4 Step 3: Choose a replacement for each line

- Cellular POTS replacement units, often called POTS-in-a-box: a device that provides a standard phone jack over the cellular network, with battery backup. Suited to elevators, alarms, gates and fax.
- Dedicated cellular or IP fire alarm communicators: purpose-built and listed for fire alarm use, connected directly to the panel.
- VoIP with an analog adapter: works for ordinary phones and some fax, but depends on the building's internet and power, so it is rarely the right choice for life-safety lines.
- Cloud fax: replaces fax machines and lines entirely where staff can send and receive by email or portal.

Check signal strength at each device location before choosing cellular; equipment rooms and elevator machine rooms are often in basements or deep inside the building.

5 Step 4: Power, testing and documentation

Each replacement needs backup power that meets the requirement for its use. Fire alarm equipment has secondary-power requirements set by code; elevator and alarm devices should keep working through a realistic outage.

Test every line end to end after installation: a signal received at the alarm monitoring center, a call answered from each elevator cab, a gate that dials out, a fax that transmits. Keep the old copper line active until the new path has been tested and accepted, then cancel it.

Document the new setup: device, location, carrier or service, monitoring contact, battery details and test results. Boards and property managers change; the documentation should not depend on

someone's memory.

6 Planning the project for a condo or multifamily building

Associations usually need board approval and a budget line. A typical sequence is inventory, proposal with costs and monthly savings, board approval, coordination with the fire alarm and elevator companies, installation, testing and inspection, then cancellation of copper lines.

Schedule work in common areas and equipment rooms first, then any unit-level lines. Give residents notice before any testing that could trigger alarms or interrupt entry systems.

✓ Checklist

- [ ] Every billed line matched to a device and location
- [ ] Unused lines confirmed and cancelled
- [ ] Fire marshal or AHJ consulted for fire alarm changes
- [ ] Elevator company and inspector involved for elevator phones
- [ ] Replacement chosen per line, with cellular signal checked on site
- [ ] Backup power meets each line's requirement
- [ ] End-to-end tests passed before copper lines are cancelled
- [ ] New setup documented for the board or facilities team

About Gagiteck Inc. Gagiteck Inc. was founded in 2020. Our leadership brings over 30 years of experience in the IT industry. Gagiteck is a national IT field services company headquartered in Tampa, Florida, with technicians in all 50 states. Its companies include IT Deployments (itdeployments.com) for multi-site field services and Gagiteck Installs (gagiteckinstalls.solutions) for smart home and building technology.

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