

Inside Telephone Wiring and Equipment

Know your responsibilities regarding the telephone wiring and equipment inside your home or business



Maintenance and testing of wires

Frequently asked questions and answers concerning telephone wiring and equipment.

Am I responsible for maintenance of telephone wire and equipment inside my home?

Yes. In the mid 1980s, all telephone companies were ordered to transfer ownership and maintenance of inside wiring and phones to customers. This allows non-telephone company sources to connect wire and equipment to the telephone network (i.e., adding jacks, etc.).

Am I responsible for the wires outside of my home?

No. The telephone utility owns and maintains the wires, including the drop wire from the pole or buried line to your residence or business premises.

What should I do if I have problems with my phone line?

If you have problems, such as no dial tone or a noisy line, testing your line before calling the phone company may save you money. This will be explained in the next section. If the problem is with your phone or inside wires, the phone company will charge you for a service call even if they do not fix the problem. If your service is provided by someone other than a telephone company, you need to contact the provider directly.

How can I test my phone line if my home has a Network Interface Device (NID)?

A NID is a gray box located outside your home or business in which you can test your phone line. If you have problems, such as no dial tone or a noisy line, take the following steps:

- Unplug your phone at the wall jack and take it (with the cord) to the NID where the outside line is connected. The NID may be in the basement or on the outside of your house.
- Open the customer-side of the NID, unplug the modular connector (same type of connector as on the end of your phone) inside the NID. Doing this disconnects your house wiring from the telephone company's network.
- Next, plug-in the connector from your telephone to the NID, pick up the handset and listen for a dial tone. If you receive a dial tone, dial a number to test for noise on the line or any other problems. If the problem disappears with your phone connected at the NID, the problem is most likely with your inside wiring.
- If the problem remains, test the line again by plugging a different phone into the NID. If the problem still occurs, it is most likely with the telephone company's network. If the problem is resolved using the second phone, try replacing the first phone or its phone cord.
- If you do not hear a dial tone after you have plugged your phone into the NID, use a neighbor's phone, cellular phone, or other phone, and dial 611 or call the telephone repair number listed in your phone book for help.

Responsibility and cost of repairs

What if I don't have a NID?

If a NID is not in place, call your telephone company. The phone company will need to visit your home or business, test the facilities and install a NID. There will be no charge for this portion of the work. You will be charged, however, if any additional work is performed by the telephone company.

What if I have a problem with my cordless phone?

You should use a phone with a cord to test your line since cordless phones generally require an electrical outlet. NIDs are not usually located near an outlet. If you are having a problem with a cordless phone, you may also want to check the battery.

Can I choose who repairs my phone or inside wire?

Yes. If the customer-owned wire or equipment shows trouble, you have the choice to pay either the telephone company or other qualified repair personnel, or to do the work yourself. Many local phone companies offer plans, for a monthly fee, and will fix any problem with your inside wire. Since problems with inside wires are relatively rare, you should determine whether this service is worth the cost.

Am I responsible for wire maintenance if I reside in an apartment or a nursing home?

In apartments, the building owner is normally responsible for maintaining wiring to the units. Residential tenants are responsible for installation service. Check your lease if you are unsure. If you are having problems with your phone, contact your apartment manager to find where your NID is located. In nursing care facilities, residents may have to pay the normal service connection charges plus wiring charges and will be responsible for maintenance if they want service in individual rooms. Often this is clearly stated in the resident's contract.

As a business customer, what is my responsibility for wire and equipment maintenance?

If you own the building, your responsibility is generally the same as described above for residential wiring. Many business customers have a building lease that specifies that the tenant has total responsibility for inside telephone facilities. In older buildings, whether owned or leased, some of the existing wiring may still be the property of the telephone company, so the business customer must contact the telephone company if any rearrangement or removal of wiring is required.

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