

PSTN SWITCH OFF

Analogue landlines are due to be disconnected in 2025. Digital voice is more vulnerable to power disruptions because it is not powered over the phone line. Concerns about generating capacity in recent years mean that power cuts in the winters ahead are a real possibility across the UK.

MOBILE AS BACK-UP

Mobile phone networks offer a potential backup to the landline service. While there has been concern about the power backup arrangements for mobile networks, another threat to resilience seems to have been overlooked.

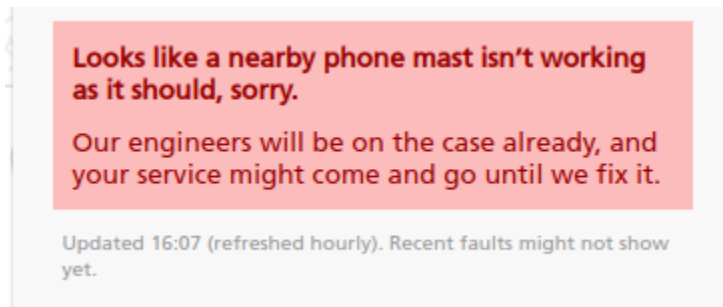
ANOTHER THREAT TO RESILIENCE

I, like a lot of older people, rely on a combination of landline and dumb mobile phones (2G only). I have found increasingly that the 2G phone network is no longer reliable - at least with the network I use (O2). Voice calls frequently experience momentary dropouts which can result in critical confusions during important financial or health related calls.

More seriously, calls in which one side of the call cannot be heard have become common. And while the network admits there is a problem it ignores complaints, charges for the non-functional calls and seemingly makes no effort to effect repairs.

At times I have carried 3 mobile phones to determine that the problem is a network problem and not a phone problem. I have established that the problem seems to be associated with particular masts. I have logged the faults and submitted complaints but there is no resolution. The areas affected are not remote rural locations but in one case a major urban centre where a mobile phone might reasonably be expected to work.

Faults may be acknowledged on the O2 Network Issues page as below:



I very much doubt engineers are 'on the case' as this issue has persisted for months. Sometimes fault messages are cleared but the fault is not fixed - giving the impression that the operator is happy for the network to continue in a state of disrepair.

THREAT TO 999 CALLS?

I have a heart condition that might require me to call an ambulance in certain circumstances. I am aware that if a user's regular network is not available then a 999 call can be routed via an alternative network. However, if the regular network has the fault I describe above - i.e. the call connects and the call is charged for but one side of the conversation is missing then I presume the network would not know that the call ought to be routed via another network.

DILEMMA

Some organisations will always use a mobile number in preference to the landline number (e.g. the NHS and some banks) even when instructed to use the landline number whenever possible. This leads to the dilemma of whether to not supply the mobile number (and miss out on potentially important text messages) or to supply it but suffer unreliable voice calls.