

3G Wireless Shutting Down in 2022

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Cell phones use several standards to communicate with the carrier tower (AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile/Sprint, and others). 4G/LTE is the most common service right now. 5G service is newer and rapidly expanding. 3G's lifecycle ends in 2022. New standards increase the number of users simultaneously using a cell tower and improve data speed, quality, privacy and security. Cellular wireless standards are separate from your home WiFi. 3G shutting down will not affect your WiFi-connected devices.

For those who have flip phones, older smartphones, and other wireless "devices" that may still use 3G technology, be aware that when 3G goes away, your devices will no longer function. Google "FCC 3G Shutdown" for official information. Major vendors have published 3G 2022 shutdown dates: ATT in February; T-Mobile (Sprint 3G) in March; T-Mobile (3G) in July; and Verizon in December.

It's time to prepare now to identify whether any of your devices use 3G. Examples of devices that may use 3G: flip phones, older Kindles, older tablets, portable Internet hotspots, kids wearables, alarm systems, personal alarm devices, alcohol monitoring devices, and other Internet-connected devices. Of particular interest to some Oakmonters may be personal emergency response systems (mPERS). For these Internet-of-things devices, contacting the provider is a way to find out if you're on 3G still.

If you have an older smartphone, get your phone's model number and either visit your provider's web site or call your provider to find out if your phone is affected. For iPhones, you can find the model information by going to Settings=>General=>About. Android smartphone configurations/settings vary widely by vendor; the easiest way to find out your model number is to search in Settings for "About Phone" or "SIM status". Doing this may also display whether you are on 3G. If you see 4G, LTE, or 5G, you are OK. Contact your provider if it's not clear.

All wireless devices have a unique IMEI identification number, kind of like a vehicle's VIN number. For non-smartphone devices, knowing the IMEI number of the device can provide information. On flip phones, dial *#06# to display the IMEI number. Non-phone devices may have the IMEI printed on the device. Going to www.imei.info, entering the IMEI, and checking the LTE section will display network capabilities of the device.

This is a complicated situation due to the many cellular phones and devices associated with many telecom companies. Your provider can give you definitive answers. Plan now to avoid the rush to purchase new devices in 2022. There are already supply-chain issues, and this 3G shutdown could make things worse as well as inflate prices. For clickable links to resources, this article in electronic form, and any questions, visit www.oakmont-learning.org.