

CRITICAL UPGRADE

Frequently Asked Questions



Do you have a date for the switch over in my area?

BT has set a date of December 2025 to switch off the Public Switch Telephone Network (PSTN) and its copper system. By then, every telephone line in the UK, of which there are over 15 million, will have moved to a fully digital network, that uses Internet Protocol (IP) across a fibre-based service. Kindly note: 2025 is the project completion deadline and not the rollout date.

With the project already underway, Openreach has confirmed that it will switch off the old copper system in phases. However, no defined program has been launched. Local areas, such as Cirencester, Cheltenham, Swindon, and Stroud, are already being targeted, with fibre-builds already in progress – you may have witnessed Openreach performing the fibre installation along roadsides local to you.

Will CIA advise me when my area will be switched off, and my alarm affected?

Security providers are not notified when a certain area will be affected. Instead, end users may only learn their security system has been impacted when it goes into failure. In some instances, network providers, such as Plusnet, EE, Sky, and Virgin, may receive notification from Openreach of an imminent date, which may be communicated to the end user; however, this cannot be guaranteed.

Why should I have my security system signalling upgraded before the switch off in my area?

To safeguard your security system and prevent a lapse in your system's functionality that could pose a threat to your premises, personal safety, police response, and insurance policy, CIA has introduced a Critical Upgrade Program that will facilitate the upgrade of your alarm signalling, before it is unable to communicate an activation signal.

Working in conjunction with CSL DualCom, a highly reputable UK signalling provider that provides a cost-effective GPRS and IP solution, CIA has formed a dedicated engineering and back-office team to help deliver the required communication unit before it is too late. With vast numbers of end users affected, and timely constraints imposed, CIA will do its best to fulfill the demand on time.

What will happen if I do not perform the upgrade?

As soon as the PSTN is switched off, the Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC), in which your security system signals to, will no longer receive an alarm activation. Your system's functionality will become compromised, and your insurance company should be informed.

Should this occur, CIA will perform the upgrade process, subject to material delivery lead time and engineering resource. To benefit the project price and resource that has been provided for this urgent undertaking, we strongly recommend scheduling your visit as soon as possible.

How will the copper switch-off affect my security system?

The removal of copper wires and analogue signals impact more than the traditional telephone system. When switched off, security alarm systems, broadband, healthcare systems and payment terminals will also be affected. It is estimated that 4 million fire and security systems that communicate to an Alarm Receiving Centre, use the PSTN network. As such, come the 01 January 2026, all alarm signalling must be via radio signal or the internet.

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continued



How do I go ahead with my upgrade?

CIA's Critical Upgrade Project Team is working through an extensive client list. Telephone and email contact is now underway. However, CIA also welcomes its clients to contact CIA direct. When you speak with a member of our team, please advise that you are calling to book an appointment for your critical upgrade, and you will be directed to the right representative.

I have no mobile phone coverage in my area. What options are available to me?

In some scenarios, a high-gain (booster) aerial may overcome any mobile issues experienced in the property. Should this not be feasible, an IP solution, which uses the internet path on a local area network (LAN) to communicate signals to the ARC, will be required. In order for this to work, an internet connection, linked to a network provider, must be in place at the property. CIA may then connect the communicator to the router, which will facilitate the communication channel to the ARC. Kindly note: dependent on where the alarm panel is installed, and the location of the router, a cable will need to be run between the two.

I am not sure if I have sufficient mobile coverage. How will I know what product to have installed?

CIA's engineers carry sophisticated signal testers, which will determine whether a GPRS unit will work reliably. These tests are performed during every service visit, with the results recorded on our secure database. With radio masts constantly being erected across the country, CIA is able to determine and advise which product will be best suited to your property.

Once the new hardware has been installed, am I able to cancel the analogue telephone line with my provider?

Assuming it is just your alarm system that utilises the telephone line, you will be able to cancel your line with your provider.

Why is the government switching off the copper system?

First implemented in 1877, the copper telephone system has served our nation for over a century. Due to its age, it is no longer as efficient as it could be. Replacement parts are hard to come by, and the system is becoming increasingly more expensive to maintain. As more devices switch to the digital network, which provide a faster and more reliable service, it is less viable for operators to run both networks simultaneously.

There are additional facets to this nationwide project. The ageing copper system consumes 0.6% of the country's energy. With the UK government's Net Zero Strategy to be net zero in all sectors by 2050, this project contributes to an overall decrease in the communications industry's carbon footprint.