

## **Verizon Copper-to-Fiber Transition**

In the District of Columbia, some Verizon consumers were recently informed that the company will no longer provide telephone services over copper lines and to maintain service with Verizon, they must migrate to their fiber-based product.

### **Why is this happening?**

At one time, copper wires provided the backbone of voice and internet communications in the United States. Over the last few years, however, the largest telecom providers are increasingly replacing Plain Old Telephone Service (POTS) over copper wire infrastructure with service via internet-based fiber optic cables. According to the providers, there is decreasing support for traditional landline service and the newer fiber optic infrastructure is more reliable, cheaper to maintain, and able to transmit more information than POTS wiring.

### **What does this mean for consumers?**

According to Verizon, these residential consumers voice services will be transferred from copper to fiber. Verizon will deactivate and may remove its copper infrastructure. The transfer to fiber will be at no additional cost to consumers. The telephone service will retain the same price, terms, and conditions. Customers who subscribe to Verizon's High Speed Internet Service over copper will need to choose a fiber-based product or obtain internet service from another provider.

Many consumers associate copper-wire based "POTS" (Plain Old Telephone Service) with reliability because the copper lines carry enough electricity to allow traditional corded telephones to work. Therefore, these "old school" telephones would still operate in the case of a power outage without the need for a battery backup. On the other hand, fiber-based infrastructure does not carry electrical current. As such, telephone systems on a fiber network must always be connected to the home's electricity or a battery backup unit (BBU).

OPC has been actively involved in the copper-to-fiber transition proceedings on the local and national level, including recent conversations with Verizon about the Company's commitment to retaining the same pricing and consumer protections provided with their current copper service.

On its "Fiber is Coming" webpage, Verizon states that during the transition and installation process: "We will provide you with a backup battery device at no charge that will power your voice service in the event of a power outage, allowing you to make and receive calls, including to 911, on your corded telephones. " These BBU's contain D-cell batteries that consumers may replace on their own, if need be.