



# ULSTER COUNTY NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**APRIL 9, 2008**

## **CELL PHONE CHANGEOVER – ANALOG PHONES DO NOT WORK**

Ulster County wants seniors who have received analog cell phones from the Ulster County Office for the Aging to be aware that the phones no longer have 911 emergency service due to a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) change that no longer requires the industry to support this technology. **THEY DO NOT WORK.**

All major cell phone companies shut down their analog systems as of March 31, 2008. The main carriers with analog service are AT&T, Verizon Wireless and Alltel.

The Office for the Aging has temporarily suspended its 911 Emergency cell phone program due to the changes in FCC regulations.

The office will continue to accept donations of digital cell phones only and will continue its program once there are digital cell phones to distribute, according to Anne Cardinale, Office for the Aging director, and Susan Zimet, Chairman of the Ulster County Legislature's Arts, Education, Tourism and Community Relations Committee.

Cell phones with digital service are not affected by this change. Most carriers have notified their customers of this changeover and have offered plans to transition their old analog equipment to digital service.

Seniors may check their cell phones to determine if they have service by turning it on and reviewing the screen activity to see if service is available. If a cell phone does not have service, Cardinale asks that it be returned to the Office for the Aging, 1003 Development Court, Kingston.

Ulster County Legislature Chairman David B. Donaldson said that once the cell phone program resumes, seniors can pick up a digital phone at the Office for the Aging for 911 emergency service.

"Seniors can return their analog cell phones to us and we will box them and ship them free to our partners at the National Sheriff's Association," Donaldson said. "They will pay us for the phones, test them, box them and return to us digital phones for distribution for seniors' emergency use."

Donaldson said Ulster County is most concerned that seniors have reliable cell phones with 911 emergency service. He said over 4,000 phones have been distributed to county residents.

"We want to make sure they have this service to ensure their safety," Donaldson said.

There are several ways to determine if a handset is analog or digital. For example, if a phone has advanced features such as instant messaging capability, an internet browser, an MP3 player, can also function as a camera or has a SIMS card, the phone is digital.

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If a person uses Sprint/ Nextel or T-Mobile as his or her carrier, the service is digital. If a user has any questions about the phone's capability, they should contact their service provider.

Additionally if an individual owns an On-Star equipped GM vehicle that is older than a 2003 model, that system may also be analog based. Residents are advised to press the On-Star button on their vehicle or contact an On-Star representative by phone or on the web.

Since most customers change their phones when they renew their service contract, very few analog phones are still on the street. However, those having older phones obtained through the Office for Aging, domestic violence shelters and other service agencies should be especially mindful of this changeover. These phones were often donated years ago when the owner replaced their analog phone with a digital model. "Ulster County would not want its most vulnerable residents to find themselves in a situation where their only means of emergency contact no longer works," Donaldson said.