

New Zealand cuts back on payphones

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New Zealand Telecom said Thursday it will remove about 400 payphones this year to modernize its payphone network.

The nation's telecommunications group said it currently has about 5,000 payphones across New Zealand, but it pointed out that call volumes from payphones have dropped about 24 percent over the past three years, with some phones not being used more than a few times a year.

"There was a time when payphones were one of the only ways that New Zealanders could access the telephone when they were away from home or the office. Today, there are nearly as many mobile phones in New Zealand (3.8 million) as there are people and the number of New Zealanders using payphones has dropped off significantly," National Payphones Manager Sheridan Broadbent said in a news release.

Nevertheless, Broadbent acknowledge the continued need for payphones and added that Telecom will continue to upgrade those that are in regular use.

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