AT&T claims a weeks-long voicemail outage will be fixed with a single device update

AT&T has been experiencing a weeks-long voicemail outage affecting some customers across the country. But it's hard to tell exactly what's causing the outage, or how long until it will be fixed — and AT&T is saying conflicting things about what's going on.

Here's what the company told us, when we asked:

> *"A recent software update to some devices may be affecting our customers' voicemail. We are working with the device manufacturer to issue a patch to resolve this and apologize for any inconvenience this has caused."*

That statement seems to suggest that only a single phonemaker is affected, and that phonemaker might share the blame for the outage — but that wouldn't make sense, because AT&T customers are reporting a wide array of different phones are having the same issue.

Right now, there's a 40+ page thread on AT&T's support forums concerning the recent voicemail issues. (It was marked as "solved" on page 8 by AT&T.) In the thread, AT&T reps have attributed the issues to something much different than a recent software update — they've said it's because of a "vendor server problem," as first stated on October 9th, and reiterated as recently as today, October 23rd:

It might be possible, as a few *Verge* commenters are suggesting, that the "vendor server" is actually the "device" that being patched. It's strange that AT&T wouldn't just say that to us, though — it declined to comment further when we asked.

Today, AT&T support reps also said that the voicemail issues are affecting customers in "multiple markets." I've seen in the thread that this has apparently affected users in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Nevada, and North Carolina, among other potential locations.

Some disgruntled customers say they filed complaints with the FCC. One who did said they were contacted by AT&T's office of the president soon after, which allegedly told them that the outage affected AT&T subscribers in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and "parts of Indiana," and said the issue was "growing."

The office also reportedly offered two solutions to get voicemail working again: just wait for the outage to be fixed, or have their mailbox rebuilt, which would delete any saved messages or messages they had received during the outage.

An October 16th message from an AT&T customer about information from AT&T's office of the president.
I tried calling AT&T's office of the president myself, but when I identified myself as a reporter for *The Verge*, I was told to speak to AT&T's public relations team.

I tried to figure out if this is affecting Android or iOS devices more. In my rough estimation from reading the thread, Samsung phones seem to have had voicemail issues more than any

other type of phone. However, people have also reported problems on iPhones, Pixels, Motorola phones, and even a Pantech flip phone. It should be noted, though, that the skew toward Samsung may be because the thread is in AT&T's Android support forums.

Complaints aren't just confined to this support thread, by the way — people are venting on Twitter, and we were tipped off to this story in the first place by an unhappy AT&T customer.

We can't take customer posts on the internet as proof there's a widespread issue, but the volume of reports over the past month and statements from AT&T itself suggests that AT&T may be experiencing a big problem — and if it's as bad as it seems, it might take more than a single software update to fix it.

Update, 9:04 PM ET: *Added the possibility, as some commenters are suggesting, that it might be AT&T's servers that are the "device" getting patched.*

https://www.theverge.com/2019/10/23/20929133/att-voicemail-outage-patch-vendor-server-problem