

SEASONAL CHECKLIST · CHRISTMAS 2026

Your Phone System Over Christmas

Christmas Day is a Friday in 2026 and Boxing Day a Saturday. Ninety minutes in October prevents the first week of January being spent apologising.

■ The 2026 to 2027 run

Date	What it is
Friday 25 December 2026	Christmas Day
Saturday 26 December 2026	Boxing Day, falling on a weekend
Monday 28 December 2026	Substitute public holiday in most states and territories
Tue 29 to Thu 31 December	Ordinary working days. Many businesses closed, and customers cannot tell.
Friday 1 January 2027	New Year's Day
Monday 4 January 2027	First ordinary working day for most businesses

Load your own state's official list, not a default

Public holidays vary between states and territories, and substitute days are declared separately by each jurisdiction. South Australia and the Northern Territory also have part-day arrangements on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. **If you operate in more than one state, set holidays per location.** The day you find a missing holiday is always the day you are closed and the phone is not.

■ Four questions, answered before you touch a setting

- **Are you actually closed, or just quieter?** These need completely different configurations, and saying closed when somebody is working costs you the calls you could have taken.
- **Who is genuinely available, on which days?** Names and dates, not a general sense that people will be around.
- **What counts as urgent?** If you cannot define it, your customers will, and their definition is broader.
- **What must customers know before you close?** The last day for orders, the reopening date, and what to do if something goes wrong. Say all three in November.

The one sentence that costs the most

"We will reopen in the new year" is not a date. A customer who knows you reopen on Monday the fourth of January will wait. A customer who does not has no way of telling whether you mean the fourth or the nineteenth, so they ring somebody else. Give the reopening date, in words, and give the last working day too, because customers planning their own December need both.

Never divert the business number to a personal mobile

It is the reflex answer and it creates three problems that outlast the holiday. No record of what was said or agreed. The customer saves that number and rings it directly for three years, at times nobody agreed to. And no way to hand over, so it all depends on one phone being charged and in range. Route to the on-call person *through the system*, with two people in the group.

■ The configuration. Ninety minutes in October, including the decisions

- 1 **Load public holidays** for twelve months from your state's official list, per location, including the 28 December substitute.
- 2 **Add your own closure dates**, the shutdown days that are not public holidays. This is the category always missed, and it covers 29 to 31 December.
- 3 **Record the messages separately**: closure, reduced hours, urgent path. Separate recordings mean you can switch without re-recording.
- 4 **Build the urgent route** to the on-call rotation through the system, two people minimum.
- 5 **Define the end of the line**. AI answer, callback commitment, or a transcribed mailbox with a named owner. Never an unbounded ring.
- 6 **Set the reopening date in the system** so normal routing returns automatically, without anybody remembering while on holiday.
- 7 **Test by previewing the dates**, then test again in mid December. Something always drifts.

■ Define urgent concretely

- Not "if this is urgent, press 1". Every caller believes it applies to them, and from where they sit it usually does.
- "If you have no hot water or a burst pipe, press 1."
- "If a patient needs to be seen today, press 1."
- "If your site has stopped, press 1."

■ The rotation needs four things

- Who is on.
- For which days.
- What they respond to.
- What they are paid or given in lieu.
- Agreed in November. Everybody vaguely on call means nobody is.

■ The January restart. The most predictable peak of the year

Prepare	Detail
The backlog has an owner and a time	Decided in December. That person does not also answer the live phone.
Widen ring groups for three days	Everybody who can answer, answers. Narrow again on the Thursday.
Turn the holiday message off before you open	A closure message on the morning of the fourth sends away the people who waited for you.
Answer the oldest first	Whoever rang on the twenty-ninth has waited longest and is closest to leaving.
Read what came in	An unusually honest sample of what customers want when you are not there to shape it.

Say the same thing in all six places

Phone greeting, after hours message, website banner, **Google Business Profile special hours**, email auto reply, and SMS auto reply on your business number. The Google listing is worth ten minutes on its own, because many people checking whether you are open never ring at all: they look at the search result, see nothing to the contrary, and either arrive at a closed door or go elsewhere.