

The Connection

JANUARY 2021



Thanks to Our Employees for Their Extra Efforts

Runestone Telecom is fortunate to have such talented and resourceful employees, who successfully navigated through the challenges of 2020 — from switching work locations to following safety precautions. We admire their dedication and thank them for continuing to deliver excellent customer service despite these hurdles.

Whatever 2021 brings, we know our employees will keep making us proud!

Contact Us

100 Runestone Drive / PO Box 336
Hoffman, MN 56339

Phone: 320-986-2013

Office Hours: M–F 8 am to 4:30 pm

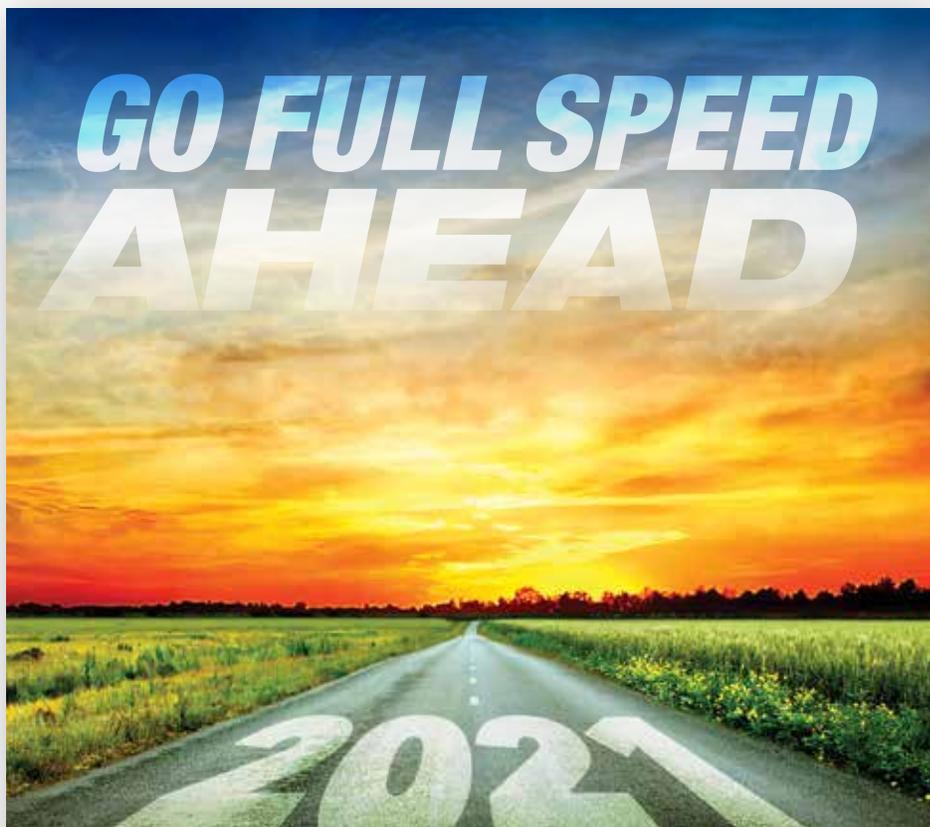
Email: rtaoffice@runestone.net

Visit Us: www.runestone.net

Holiday Observed

Runestone will observe New Year's Day on Friday, January 1st. Trouble calls will be handled by our on-call technicians.

Runestone
Telecom Association



RUNESTONE TELECOM WISHES YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

If your family received new Internet-connected devices as holiday gifts — such as tablets, laptops, smartphones, streaming equipment, smart home solutions, video doorbells, and home security systems — you may need a new Internet plan as well.

Upgrading to faster Internet will enable you to use many devices simultaneously without experiencing slowdowns and buffering. We offer a range of plans with speeds up to 1,000 Mbps.*

***CALL 320-986-2013
TO START THE NEW YEAR WITH NEW INTERNET***

*Service availability and Internet speed will depend on location. Certain restrictions apply. Contact us for details.

New Members

Barrett

Englund, Susan..... 528-2337
Mickelson, Dale..... 528-4802

Cyrus

Sanders, Adam 795-2197

Donnelly

Maloney, Haley..... 246-2016

Elbow Lake

Kastner, Lori 685-4559
O'Fallon, M Jean..... 685-4896

Hoffman

Knapp, Michael 986-2004
Trinka, N K..... 986-2042
Wonder Years
Community Preschool..... 986-2100

Lowry

Carlson, Erica..... 283-5522



How to Write a Helpful Product or Service Review

Online reviews are most valuable when they contain clear and complete information. Follow these guidelines:

Experience the product or service first-hand. This might go without saying, but don't review anything you haven't tried. Review readers are looking for personal experience, and you can't provide it unless you've actually been there and done that.

Take photos. If you're reviewing a restaurant, take your photos before you start eating to show the dishes at their best. When reviewing a store, capture sections that show the product selection or the friendly faces of helpful staff.

Wait for a day or two. If you want to post a negative review, wait awhile so your emotions don't get in the way of objectively describing a bad experience. If you're displeased, first mention the things you did like about the product or service (there must be at least one or two). Then explain why, overall, the negative outweighed the positive.

Use details. Your review can be as brief or as long as you like, but the more details you include, the more useful it will be. For example, you could write, "The service was great," or you could write, "Our waiter was always around when we needed him, without being intrusive. He was super friendly and gave us excellent recommendations for the best wine to drink with our meal."

Ask a friend to review your review. It might be "just" a review, but the easier it is to read, the more helpful it will be to others. Ask a friend with a good command of writing to look it over for spelling, grammar, and flow.

Make suggestions. Remember that business owners and managers are also reading your reviews, not only potential customers. If you have a problem with a business, suggest a solution. For example, "The line was a complete bottleneck. It would be much more efficient if customers could wait at their tables for their food."



FUSC Rate Change

The FUSC (Federal Universal Service Contribution) is scheduled to increase from 27.1% to 31.8% on January 1st, 2021.

College Scholarship Opportunities

Runestone Telecom is proud to offer these scholarship opportunities through the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS), in cooperation with NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association. They seek to enhance the quality of life in America by advancing an understanding of rural issues and strongly support the continuing education of rural youth.

Here are the scholarships available:

- Four \$5,000 Staurulakis Family Scholarships (*Preference is given to students majoring in math, science, engineering or medicine.*)
- One \$7,000 Everett Kneese Scholarship
- One \$5,000 Herbert and Isabel Bitz Memorial Scholarship
- \$2,000 scholarship from FRS, with a \$500 match from Runestone Telecom (*Scholarships will be awarded per geographic region of the NTCA membership and one sponsored NTCA Associate member. The awards are distributed proportionate to the number of applications received per region.*)

Each scholarship applicant must:

- Be a graduating high school senior
- Be a US citizen
- Be accepted by an accredited two- or four-year college, university or vocational-technical school
- Have at least a C grade point average (GPA)
- Express interest to return to a rural community following graduation
- Have a parent with at least one Runestone Telecom service

The application must be postmarked to FRS no later than March 5th, 2021. A signature from our general manager, board of director or designated employee of Runestone Telecom is required, so please apply early.

You can find the application on our website at www.runestone.net or on the FRS website at www.frs.org/programs/youth-programs/scholarships.



Don't Pass by This Password Reminder

You've heard it before, but we'll say it again. It's important to have strong passwords and change them regularly to help keep your accounts safe. Here are the basics:

Don't use personal information.

This includes names of people in your family, your address, or birthdays, since this information can be publicly available to hackers.

Don't use real words. Password cracking tools can process every word in the dictionary until a match is found. Instead, use uppercase and lowercase letters combined with special characters such as "&" or "#."

Create longer passwords. The longer it is, the better. Try for at least 10 characters.

Don't use the same password for multiple websites. If one website has a data breach and you've used that password elsewhere, it's easier for hackers to steal more information.

Change your passwords. Get in the habit of changing them twice a year when you reset your clocks for Daylight Saving Time.

4 Good Reasons to Switch to eBilling

Are you still paying your Runestone Telecom bill by writing a check and mailing it to us? If so, we encourage you to consider switching to eBilling and paying electronically instead.

You'll enjoy benefits including:

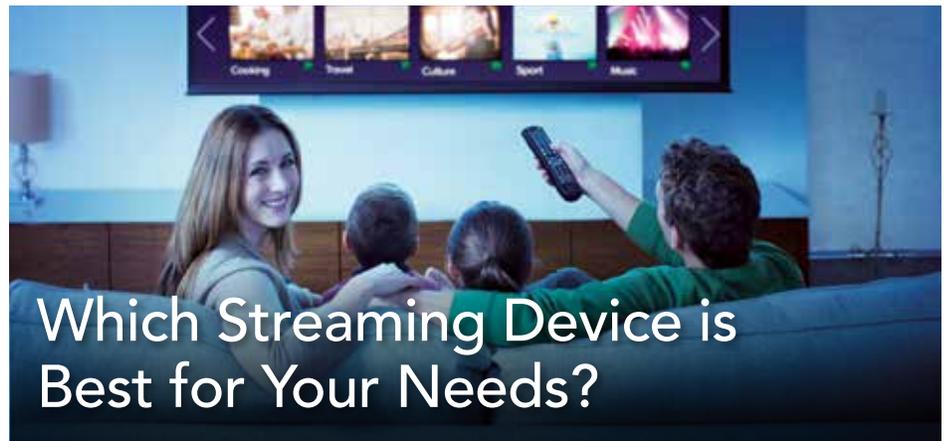
1. More Security – Paper bills leave you vulnerable to sensitive information being stolen and used for identity theft. Your mail could be taken from the mailbox or from a garbage can. With eBilling, you communicate securely with Runestone Telecom via a password-protected online portal.

2. Saves You Money – You won't have to buy as many postage stamps or checks when you use eBilling.

3. Faster Than Traditional Bill Paying – Why waste time finding a bill, writing a check, looking for a stamp, and walking to the mailbox? With eBilling, you can pay online in seconds or have your bill paid automatically with Automatic Payment.

4. Better for the Environment – Mother Earth loves eBilling! It reduces paper use and saves trees.

To sign up for eBilling, visit www.runestone.net and follow the easy step-by-step instructions.



If you're planning to "cut the cord" from cable or satellite TV and switch to streaming over your Internet connection, you'll need a streaming device to support your streaming service(s). There are many device options available, but these are widely regarded as the top picks for various types of users:

Best streaming device: Amazon Fire TV Cube

The Amazon Fire TV Cube is actually more than just a streaming device. Using Alexa, it lets you control almost everything in your entertainment center with just your voice. There's only a minimal need for a remote.

Best streaming stick: Roku Streaming Stick+

This tiny device (resembling a USB drive) is considered to be the best streaming stick on the market. It offers great features for an affordable price, and its interface is easy to use.

Best premium streamer: Roku Ultra (2019)

This powerful set-top box provides more speed and media options than the Roku Streaming Stick. It even has a "lost remote" button that will trigger a tone from the remote.

Best budget streamer: Roku Express

Penny pinchers will love the Roku Express, which delivers just the streaming basics for a low price. You won't get "bells and whistles," but you will get a bargain.

Best streamer for Apple lovers: Apple TV 4K

The Apple TV 4K is the obvious choice for Apple devotees who want a seamless TV experience across all their Apple devices. It comes with lots of streaming apps.

Before you select a streaming device, be sure to do your homework online to review details about features and prices. It's also a good idea to talk to friends and family to see what brand of streaming device they're using. If you're lucky, you may even find someone to help you with setup!

To enjoy the best experience while streaming—free from annoying buffering—you'll want a fast Internet connection. Call us at 320-986-2013 for information about our range of Internet speeds.