

# The Connection

MARCH 2021



## We're Hoping for a Bright and Cheerful Spring Season

March's birth flower is the daffodil, which is appropriate, since its cheerful yellow petals are the harbinger of spring. After a long winter, isn't it always a joy to see daffodils appear?

Runestone Telecom wishes you a spring season that's as bright with hope and promise as these flowers. We encourage you to get outside to connect with nature and use technology to connect with others. Better days are ahead!

### Contact Us

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**Runestone**  
Telecom Association



Home is everything these days. It's a workplace, a school, a library, a movie theater, a gym, a shopping center, and the backdrop for virtual gatherings with family and friends. However, your home can also be a frustration zone if your internet is too slow to handle all the activity.

The solution is to upgrade to faster Internet. We offer a range of plans with speeds up to 1,000 Mbps.\*

**Call 320-986-2013 to transform  
your Internet experience!**

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

## Runestone Telecom Receives State of Minnesota Border to Border Broadband Grant for the Villard Area

We're excited to announce that Runestone Telecom has received a \$1,463,259 grant to bring Fiber To The Home (FTTH) to the unserved households in the Villard area. This area will encompass nearly 500 households, over 30 businesses, nine farms, and five community institutions in northeast Pope County. In a funding partnership with the State of Minnesota and Pope County, we'll bring broadband speed levels up to 1 Gbps (approximately 1,000 Mbps). We hope this project will increase economic development in our area and facilitate telecommunication and distance learning options now and into the future.

## Refer to the New, Recycle the Old

The 2021 Vikingland Regional Directory should have been mailed to you in February. You may also pick up a copy at our office.

Minnesota law requires all discarded telephone directories be recycled. Please return your old directory to our office, put it in your normal recycling bins, or bring it to your local recycling center. Grant County Recycling does accept old directories.



## When Should You Use a WiFi Mesh Device?

If you're having trouble getting a reliable WiFi signal in certain areas of your home, the first thing to try is moving your WiFi router to the most central location possible. If that doesn't help—or if changing the router's location isn't practical—consider your router's age. If yours has been around for several years, it's probably time to get a new, updated model with the latest WiFi technology.

Runestone Telecom leases managed routers for only \$3.95 a month! If you have a leased managed router from us and are having issues, call us. Our trained Internet Support staff can remotely make many needed changes. If we find the router is not working properly, we'll replace it at no extra charge to you.



Should taking these steps not improve your signal strength and coverage, adding a WiFi mesh device might be the answer. You'll need a leased managed router from us to lease a WiFi mesh device, and these units can be leased for only \$3.95 a month. A mesh device will work in harmony with our managed router to expand coverage to areas of your home that are currently underserved. For example, let's say you have a large, multi-story home and your router is centrally located on the main level in the office. If an upstairs bedroom in the far corner struggles with buffering issues while streaming TV shows and movies, a WiFi mesh device may solve the problem.

Since we lease and manage these devices, one of our technicians can determine the best placement for optimal coverage in your home—either remotely or in person. We can also fix issues before they occur to ensure an amazing Wi-Fi experience.

Remember, the best connection will always be a wired connection. We understand that this may not be possible given your number of users and devices. When possible, however, connect devices with an Ethernet port directly into your router using an Ethernet cable. For those devices not offering this option, a WiFi mesh device may be the best wireless alternative.

**Runestone Telecom can help you resolve WiFi issues, and if necessary, refer you to our leased managed devices to meet your home's WiFi needs. Call 320-986-2013.**

# My Guide to Today's Television Landscape

By Kent Hedstrom, GM/CEO

I get questions from many of you about TV, so I'm sharing information on some key topics:

## Cable Television Rate Increases

These happen yearly, and your most recent bill reflects the latest increases. The costs for the content we put on our cable system continue to escalate. For customer clarification, Runestone Telecom breaks down your cable bill in two parts: The RTA Portion (which is \$15 for the basic package and \$13 for the broadcast package) and the programming portion (which is paid directly to the content providers). The "Big 4" networks—ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC—make up a significant part of the programming portion of your bill. We began paying retransmission fees to these networks in 2009, and those rates have increased in excess of 950% since then.



## Accessing Programming Using Locast

Locast, ([locast.org](http://locast.org)) is a not-for-profit service that allows users to access all the programming you could receive with an antenna in the Twin Cities Metro area (in excess of 45 channels including the Big 4) over your Internet connection. You can watch on your television via an Amazon Fire TV, Apple TV, Android, or Roku device or on your PC. Locast has an integrated guide that displays programming for the upcoming week. The service requests an optional \$5/month donation to keep it operating. Locast is similar to the Selective TV ([selectivetv.org](http://selectivetv.org)) over-the-air product—another great viewer-supported option from a nonprofit. Selective TV has more than 60 channels and is transmitted from their tower in Garfield.

## How to Get the Channels You Want

Looking for a particular channel not in our lineup? Subscription streaming services such as AT&T TV, YouTube TV, Sling, Fubo TV, and Philo may include the programming you want, and most offer a free 7-day trial. One of the best sites to see which of these streaming services is best for you is [www.suppose.tv](http://www.suppose.tv). It allows you to select the channels you want and pair your selection with the provider that will be the best fit.

## We're Here for You

Runestone Telecom has been a cable television provider since 1993. I understand that many of our customers like the simplicity of our system, with one cable from the wall to the set and the ability to use the remote control that came with your TV. We'll do our best to stay as competitive as we can with our offering.

In the meantime, we'll help you decide the best viewing experience for your family's needs, even if it means no longer subscribing to our cable TV service. Our trained staff can help you determine if a streaming platform would be a more cost-effective way to view your favorite programming. We won't leave you hanging in this ever-changing TV landscape. Please reach out to us if you have any questions.

## WGN America Rebrands to NewsNation

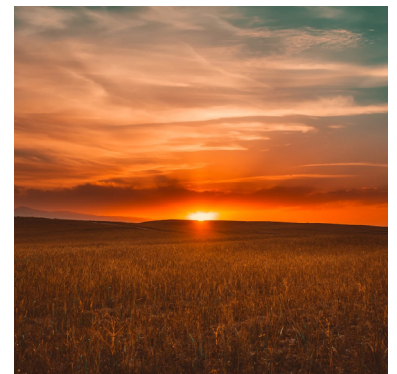
On March 1st, 2021, the WGN America channel will officially rebrand as NewsNation and will expand its primetime news programming to five hours every weeknight. NewsNation remains committed to delivering fact-based and unbiased news. With the expansion of the nightly news program, NewsNation will provide viewers with fact-based national news and regional stories as well as coverage of the day's most important issues.

## MN TAP Program Changes

On April 1st, 2021, the monthly TAP credit will increase from \$7 to \$10 per qualified household. The TAP surcharge will decrease from \$0.10 to \$0.07 per line.

## Sun Outages May Affect TV Picture

For a few minutes a day in early March, you may experience a fuzzy TV picture, sparkles, tiling, freeze frame, or total loss of channels. This occurs due to sun outages, when the orbital positions of the satellite and the sun are aligned.



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## Alexander Graham Bell Made History on March 10, 1876

March 10 was selected for National Landline Telephone Day to honor the anniversary of the day Alexander Graham Bell transmitted his first phone call to Thomas Watson. By doing so, Bell rang in a whole new chapter in communications history.

If you say “landline” to a younger person, they may not know what you’re talking about. So here’s the definition: A landline is a phone that uses metal wire or optical fiber lines for transmission, unlike a mobile phone, which uses radio waves.

Whether you still have a landline in your home or just remember using one years ago, National Landline Telephone Day is the perfect time to reflect on its unique benefits. For example, landlines helped to keep families connected. When you called your cousin’s house, you had no idea who was going to pick up. The phone might get passed amongst family members before it ended up with the cousin you called in the first place.

**The dependability and call quality of landlines still make them a good choice for many households. To learn more, call 320-986-2013.**

## New Members

### Hoffman

ProAg Farmers  
Cooperative-Hoffman..... 320-986-2007

### Elbow Lake

Bailey, Harleyjo ..... 320-378-0183  
Wilken, Lee ..... 320-864-3333

# Annual Notice of Lifeline Program and Telephone Assistance Plan



You may be eligible for help paying your telephone bill through these two programs:

**The Lifeline Program** is a federal one which offers a monthly discount up to \$9.25 on some landline telephone service plans and/or internet plans. Lifeline also offers discounts on some wireless telephone service plans and some broadband internet service plans. You may receive the Lifeline discount on one service per household. The definition of a household is anyone living at an address—including children, relatives, or people not related to you—who share income(s) and household expenses.

**Minnesota’s Telephone Assistance Plan (TAP)** offers a monthly credit of \$7.00 (will increase to \$10.00 starting April 1st, 2021) on your landline telephone service. You can receive the TAP credit on one landline per household.

## Qualifications

The telephone or broadband service must be in your name. You must show proof that you or a member of your household participates in at least one of the following programs or is income eligible:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Medicaid
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit Programs

If you do not participate in any of the programs listed above, you may qualify if your income is at or below 135% of the 2021 Federal Poverty Income Guidelines:

Household Size	Income	Household Size	Income
One	\$17,388	Five	\$41,904
Two	\$23,517	Six	\$48,033
Three	\$29,646	Seven	\$54,162
Four	\$35,775	Eight	\$60,291

For each additional person, add \$6,129.

## Application

To apply, go to [nationalverifier.servicenowservices.com/lifeline](https://nationalverifier.servicenowservices.com/lifeline) or contact Runestone Telecom. One application may be used to apply for both the Lifeline Program and TAP. Return the application and proof of eligibility to: USAC Lifeline Support Center PO Box 7081 London, KY 40742. It can take up to two months for discounts to appear on your bill. Discounts cannot be applied to past due bills. You must pay the phone bill until that time.