

The Connection

SEPTEMBER 2022

Happy Grandparents Day to Grand Folks

Grandparents Day was first declared a national holiday in 1978 by President Jimmy Carter. Since then, it's been celebrated yearly on the first Sunday after Labor Day. It's a grand time for gatherings to honor the vital role played by grandparents in the lives of their families.

Runestone Telecom wishes all the best to the grandparents in our community. Enjoy your day!



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Holiday Observed

Runestone Telecom will be closed on Monday, September 5th in observance of Labor Day. Trouble calls will be handled by our on-call technicians.



Fiber News is Made Possible by Our Hardworking Crews

We'd like to publicly thank the members of our crews for their hard work and dedication. They're helping Runestone Telecom bring fiber optic service—and its superfast Internet speeds—to an increasing number of people in our service area.

1. Chris Schmiesing (left) and Joe Polzin connect fiber optic lines to wireless access points at one of the resorts serviced by Runestone Telecom.
2. A directional drill bores non-vertically into the sub-surface to make way for fiber optic lines.
3. You may have seen our own technicians working in the field.
- 4,5. Backhoes are used to make way for routing the pipes and fiber into the installed pedestal.
6. This reel of duct houses the cables that technicians use to pull fiber underground.



Videos Preserve Family Memories

Family photos have always been important for remembering fun times and preserving family history. Photos are still important, and smartphones make it super convenient to take photos on a daily (if not hourly) basis. But don't stop there! If you only occasionally shoot videos, here are excellent reasons to do so more often:

- Video captures interactions between family members.
- Video includes more details, such as the surroundings.
- Video allows us to hear people's voices and see gestures and quirks that photos can't.
- Video gives the opportunity to narrate situations and provide context for what's going on.

Looking for video inspiration? Shoot everyday moments like your children playing, or interview older family members about their lives. If you traditionally send out a holiday card with a family photo, consider also making a family video showing highlights from the year. You could share this video on social media or send it to close family and friends only. Most of all, you'll have it to watch for many years to come.



6 Ways to Make Your WiFi Network More Secure

A secure home WiFi network is an essential aspect of Internet safety. Hackers can exploit vulnerable networks to install malware, carry out data and identity theft, and create botnets. To help prevent unauthorized WiFi access, take these precautions:

1. Place your router in a central location. Not only does this distribute network access more evenly for you, but it also helps keep your network out of reach/view from people outside of your home, including hackers.

2. Change the default name. One of the easiest things you can do to secure your network is to change the default name, which is also known as the SSID (Service Set Identifier). Typically, router manufacturers create default SSIDs by combining a company name with numbers and letters. If criminals know the manufacturer of your router, they may know the model's vulnerabilities and how to exploit them. Change the SSID to something that doesn't disclose the router brand or your name or address.



3. Change the password. A strong password is at least 12 characters long and contains a mix of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols. For a secure home network, it's a good idea to change your password every six months or so.

4. Create a guest network. This separate network provides Internet access to your guests but hides any shared folders, printers, storage devices, and network devices connected to your primary network. When you set up a guest network, create a separate guest SSID and guest password.

5. Turn on data encryption and filtering. Encryption technology rearranges the information that goes through your wireless router in such a way that it's difficult for humans to read without permission. Filters in your router can identify friendly users and decline access for unknown users.

6. Turn on your router's firewall. A firewall helps to prevent unwanted traffic from entering or leaving your wireless network without your knowledge, and most wireless routers are preloaded with excellent hardware-based firewall options. However, router firewalls are often not turned on by default, which means you may need to activate yours.

If you have questions or need additional assistance with the protection of your home's WiFi network, call us at 320-986-2013. We offer Managed WiFi service.

No, Microsoft is Not Calling You About a Computer Problem



People fall victim to tech support scams since the phone call, email, or pop-up message appears to be serious—about an “urgent computer problem”—and from a well-known tech company such as Microsoft or Apple. Don’t be fooled.

Tech support scammers may use lots of technical terms to try and convince you immediate action is required. They may ask you to open some files or run a scan on your computer, and then tell you those files or the scan results show a problem.

Here’s what else scammers may do:

- Ask you to give them remote access to your computer, which lets them access all information stored on it.
- Try to enroll you in a worthless computer maintenance or warranty program.
- Install malware that gives them access to your computer and sensitive data, like usernames and passwords.
- Ask for credit card information so they can bill you for phony services or services available elsewhere for free.
- Try to sell you software or repair services that are worthless or available elsewhere for free.
- Direct you to websites and ask you to enter credit card, bank account, and other personal information.

Now that you know the warning signs, you’ll be able to more easily spot tech support scams and act appropriately. If a caller says your computer has a problem, hang up. Legitimate technology companies will not call you out of the blue. Be aware that scammers use fake caller ID information to look like local businesses or trusted companies.

If you get a pop-up message warning you of a computer problem and telling you to call tech support or click on a link, ignore it. Never give remote access to your computer or provide your password to someone who contacts you unexpectedly.

It’s also important to keep your computer’s operating system and other software updated, so you’ll have the latest protections against security threats.

Everybody Wins When You Choose Our Local Team

Runestone Telecom knows you have options when it comes to choosing communications service providers. So, we thank you for your loyal support. It’s truly a win-win decision for these reasons:

- **Our local economy wins.** Runestone Telecom employs area residents and the dollars you spend with us stay close to home. In addition, we provide the advanced communications services, such as high-speed Internet, required for businesses to grow.
- **Our local nonprofit organizations and community events win.** We’re actively involved in the communities we serve through membership in local chamber and civic clubs as well as through volunteer work and financial donations.
- **Our local students win.** Runestone Telecom participates in the FRS (Foundation for Rural Service) scholarship program as well as the Minnesota Telecom Alliance offering scholarships to high school seniors.



Everybody wins when we work together.

We’ve Added Twist to Our Lineup

Our cable TV lineup now includes Twist, a KARE affiliate. Twist is a broadcast television network offering reality and lifestyle shows. Check it out on channel 17.5.

Sun Outages May Affect TV Service

In late September and early October, cable TV customers may experience some degree of television interference due to sun outages, which are caused by a phenomenon known as “solar satellite interference.” This occurs when the sun passes directly behind the satellites that transmit cable signals to TV providers.

During a sun outage, you may briefly experience pixelated TV pictures, picture freezes, or audio distortions on a certain channel. You don’t have to do anything to restore your service. Simply wait a few minutes for the event to end.

If you have trouble with your Runestone Telecom TV service that lasts longer than a few minutes, please call us at 320-986-2013.

Lifeline Provides Monthly Discounts

Lifeline Awareness Week is September 19th-23rd. This FCC program offers a monthly discount of up to \$9.25 off phone or Internet service to qualifying households—making it more affordable to have vital access to loved ones, health care, and workforce opportunities. **Visit LifelineSupport.org to see if you qualify.**

New Members

Elbow Lake

Hage, Mary A &
Patrick J Casey 218-685-4022

Villard

Theis, Tom 320-554-6524

What Internet Speed Do You Need?

You may not need the fastest Internet speed around, but you do want enough bandwidth to accommodate all your household’s users and devices.

Fast Internet makes it easier to do high-bandwidth activities (like streaming in 4K or downloading a large video game file) without worrying about long load times, buffering, or a dropped connection. It also means multiple devices can be used simultaneously with everyone enjoying a good online experience.

If you suspect your current Internet speed is no longer sufficient, you may be wondering how fast your home’s Internet speed should be. There aren’t any hard-and-fast rules, since different households will have a range of Internet usage demands and expectations. A person living alone who only goes online for things like email and web browsing doesn’t need as much Internet speed as a family of five streaming Netflix in every room.

BroadbandNow, a national resource that assembles data from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Internet service providers, offers this chart as a general guideline:

Internet Speed	Users Supported	Speed Summary
25 Mbps	1–2	Basic
100 Mbps	3–4	Average
200 Mbps	4–5	Fast
500 Mbps	5+	Very Fast
1,000 Mbps	5+	Gigabit



The FCC’s minimum fixed broadband speed benchmark is currently 25 Mbps for downloading and 3 Mbps for uploading data, commonly referred to as “25/3 Mbps.” Speeds below this basic level, while common years ago, will be unlikely to accommodate today’s Internet usage. Even single-person households will need an Internet download speed of at least 25 Mbps.

Internet speeds in the 100–200 Mbps range are ideal for most households since they can handle common activities like streaming and video chat for two to five users at once. It’s interesting to note that according to HighSpeedInternet.com, the 2022 average Internet speed in the United States is 119.03 Mbps. By comparison, the 2021 average Internet speed was 99.3 Mbps, which means speeds have gone up 20% in one year.

Large families or households with one or more people working from home may want to consider Internet speeds well above 200 Mbps for the best online experience.

To check the speed of your current Internet connection, go to www.runestone.net and click on “Internet Speed Test” at the bottom of the page. For help determining if your household needs a speed upgrade, call us 320-986-2013.