

The Connection

JANUARY 2023



We Really Believe in Real Service from Real People

While Runestone Telecom offers modern communications technology, we take a somewhat old-fashioned approach to customer service. For example, a real person answers the phone when you call. You receive real help when you walk into our office with questions. And our technicians take a real interest in resolving issues real fast. We really want to please you!

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

Find Us:   

Review Us: 

Holiday Observed

Runestone Telecom will be closed on Monday, January 2nd for the New Year's holiday. Trouble calls will be handled by our on-call technicians.



Happy NEW GEAR!

The new year has begun, and your home may have new Internet-connected devices in it. Maybe Santa brought your children new phones, tablets, or a gaming console. Or maybe you used holiday money to finally purchase the new computer or smart home devices you've been wanting.

The more devices you have, the more speed you need — to enjoy the best Internet experience and avoid frustrations like buffering. We recommend our 1,000 Mbps plan for bandwidth-busy households.

CALL 320-986-2013 TO DOUBLE YOUR SPEED FOR AS LITTLE AS \$3 A MONTH!

Now's the Time to Get Organized (GO)

Does this sound familiar? You spend an hour digging through a messy closet to look for something — that you may or may not find — then spend additional time putting everything back.

January is Get Organized Month, or GO Month. It's meant to encourage us to live a more organized life. What are the benefits? Being organized can help you reduce stress as well as save time and money.

Dailymom.com suggests these free home organization apps:

- **Homer** helps you keep track of important papers such as mortgage documents, lease paperwork, and warranties, so you aren't scrambling to find a document when it's needed.
- **Tody** makes it easy to stay on top of chores. Room by room, you enter the tasks that need to get done and how often you want to do them. Tody reminds you when it's time for a task.
- **The Cozi Family Organizer** lets users connect their Google and Apple calendars to this app, so everyone stays updated on family and individual activities.

We hope we've inspired you to GO!

New Members

Cyrus

Zimny, Carol.....320-795-2286

Elbow Lake

Mobraaten, Marion.....218-685-3002

Kensington

Nutrien Ag Solutions320-965-2688

Lowry

Clobes, Ron & Julie.....320-283-2348

Wendell

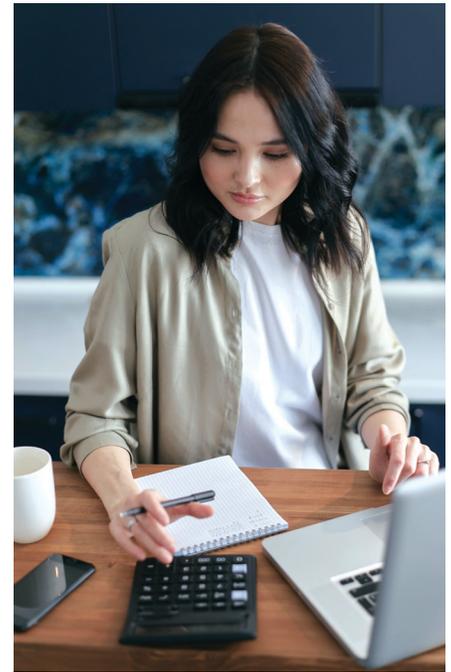
Ulrich, Joshua218-458-2015

Paying Bills Online Offers Valuable Advantages

Are you still receiving paper bills and paying them by writing and mailing checks? While you may feel comfortable with this method after using it for many years, consider making a switch to online bill pay.

Why? Online bill pay provides valuable advantages including these:

- **You Gain Security** – When you have printed bills and envelopes with checks in your mailbox, sensitive information could be stolen and used for identity theft. But when you receive and pay bills electronically, you communicate with your bank, utility, or other company via a password-protected online portal that uses encryption and other security technologies to keep your information secure.
- **You Save Time and Money** – Why waste time finding a bill, writing a check, looking for a stamp, and walking to the mailbox? With online bill pay, you can pay in seconds or have your bill paid automatically each month through an Auto Pay program. You also won't have to buy as many postage stamps or checks when you use online bill pay.



There are two categories of online bill pay available. You can pay companies individually via their website, such as what's offered with Runestone Telecom's eBill. Or you can authorize your bank or credit union to pay multiple bills from different companies using its website or mobile app. There's no need to choose one or the other exclusively. You can use either online bill pay method or both, depending on what best suits your financial needs.

Our eBill service lets you receive your monthly bills from Runestone Telecom by email and pay them online with your credit card or debit card. You also have the option to choose Auto Pay to have your payment automatically deducted from your chosen bank account each month, so you don't have to worry about forgetting to pay your bill.

To get started with eBill and set up your account, simply visit www.runestone.net and follow the step-by-step instructions. If you have questions, call 320-986-2013.



The IRS wants to raise awareness of tax-related identity theft, which occurs when someone uses your stolen personal information, including your Social Security number, to file a tax return claiming a fraudulent refund.

You could be a victim of tax-related identity theft if any of the following take place:

- You get a letter from the IRS inquiring about a suspicious tax return that you did not file.
- You can't e-file your tax return because of a duplicate Social Security number.
- You get a tax transcript in the mail that you did not request.
- You get an IRS notice that an online account has been created in your name.
- You get an IRS notice that your existing online account has been accessed or disabled when you took no action.
- You get an IRS notice that you owe additional tax or refund offset, or that you have had collection actions taken against you for a year you did not file a tax return.
- IRS records indicate you received wages or other income from an employer you didn't work for.
- You've been assigned an Employer Identification Number but you did not request an EIN.

Taking steps to protect your personal information can help you avoid tax identity theft. Keep your tax records and Social Security card in a safe place. When you decide to get rid of your tax records, shred them.

It's also important to protect your information from scammers online and on your phone. If you use tax preparation software like TurboTax, TaxAct, or TaxSlayer, use multi-factor authentication, which offers extra security by requiring two or more credentials to log in to your account. Multi-factor authentication makes it harder for scammers to log in to your accounts.

Lastly, don't give your personal information to someone who calls, emails, or texts and says they're with the IRS. It could be a scammer impersonating the IRS to steal your information or money. If you need to contact the IRS, call them at 1-800-829-1040.

Keep Your Mobile Device Warm in Cold Weather

Mobile devices don't respond well to cold weather. When a lithium-ion battery is exposed to the cold, it can drain faster than normal or indicate it has ample power remaining and then suddenly go dead. Low temperatures can also make



a device's glass surfaces more sensitive to cracks and breaks, especially if there's already a nick.

If your device must be in cold weather for long periods, the best option is to store it in an insulated case. For brief periods outside, simply put it in a clothing pocket closest to your person or in a purse or backpack.

Should your device shut down as the result of the cold, don't restart it until you've given it time to warm up. Restarting immediately could cause more harm and shorten your battery life.

Reminder of the Do Not Call Registry

The National Do Not Call Registry lets you indicate you don't want to receive telemarketing calls. Register your home or mobile phone numbers for free at www.donotcall.gov or by calling 1-888-382-1222. After registration, most of these calls should cease within 90 days. However, some calls can continue to be made to you including those from political groups, charities, and companies with whom you've had contact.

Helping Hands and Kind Hearts Enhance Communities

Runestone Telecom feels strongly that it's important for everyone to give back to our community in some way—whether through volunteering, participation in community activities, financial donations, or a combination of the above.

Without such support, our less fortunate neighbors may struggle to access life's necessities

for their families, from food and clothing to educational or health care resources. In addition, some of the treasured annual events we enjoy could not continue were it not for the volunteers who step up to the plate and make them happen. Giving back to our community makes it a better place for all of us.



Rate Changes

Effective January 3rd, 2023, the FUSC (Federal Universal Service Contribution) will increase from 28.9% to 32.6%.

Effective February 1st, 2023, Runestone Cable TV rates will increase. Basic Broadcast will go from \$35.76 to \$38.85, and Expanded Basic will go from \$84.48 to \$90.85. While we do our best to keep rates as low as possible, the price we must pay for programming continues to go up, so we had to make these changes to continue bringing you popular channels.

College Scholarship Opportunities are Available



Runestone Telecom is proud to offer scholarship opportunities through the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS), in cooperation with the NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association. These organizations seek to enhance the quality of life in America by increasing awareness of rural issues and strongly supporting the continuing education of rural youth.

The following scholarships are available:

- Four \$5,000 Staurulakis Family Scholarships (*Preference is given to students majoring in math, science, engineering, or medicine.*)
- One \$7,000 Everett Kneece Scholarship
- One \$5,000 Herbert and Isabel Bitz Memorial Scholarship
- \$2,500 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 U.S. 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 in returning to a rural community following graduation
- Have a parent/guardian with at least one Runestone Telecom service

The application will be accepted by FRS no later than February 8th, 2023. A signature from our general manager, a member of our board of directors, or a designated employee of Runestone Telecom is required, so please apply early.

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