

# Connections

FEBRUARY 2025

## We Want You to Love Technology

Runestone Telecom understands it can sometimes be challenging when you start using technology that's new to you — such as a new device, service, or app. That's why our local team is always happy to answer questions and help you fully enjoy the Internet-related technology in your life. Here's to less stress and more fun!



### 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.com](mailto:rtaoffice@runestone.com)

24/7 HelpDesk for Internet Outages and Technical Support:  
320-986-6655

[helpdesk@runestone.net](mailto:helpdesk@runestone.net)

Visit Us: [www.runestone.net](http://www.runestone.net)

Find Us:   

Review Us on Google



Please let others know about your experience as a Runestone Telecom customer. Scan this code and leave a review on Google. Thanks!




*Cupid's Perfect Match =*  
**YOU+SPEED**

**Fall in love with Internet that's music to your ears!**  
Cupid's not just aiming for hearts this Valentine's Day—he's targeting slow connections too! If sluggish Internet has been getting in the way of your online fun, you'll be lovestruck with our high speeds.

With Internet faster than Cupid's arrow, you'll enjoy effortless browsing, smooth gaming, and video chatting with loved ones. Whether you're streaming music or watching your favorite rom-com, our lightning-fast connection will hit all the right notes!

**CALL 320-986-2013 AND LET CUPID PAIR YOU WITH THE INTERNET OF YOUR DREAMS.**  
*Happy Valentine's Day!*

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

## Enjoying Your Faster Internet Speeds at Lower Prices?

We recently upgraded the speeds for our Internet customers and lowered the monthly prices. Did you miss out on this upgrade? Call our office at 320-986-2013. If you have speeds of 10-15 Mbps or slower, please contact us for assistance.

### New Members

#### Elbow Lake

Gilbert, Kandi.....218-685-5237

Palm, Michael &

Bonnie .....218-685-2001

#### Kensington

Kangas, Josie ..... 320-965-2752

#### Lowry

Cooper, Harold &

Sandy.....320-283-2018

## New 2025 Directory

Watch your mailbox for the 2025 Viking Regional Directory coming to you this month. You may also pick up a copy at our office.

Minnesota law requires all discarded telephone directories to be recycled. Please return your directory to our office, put it in your normal recycling bins, or bring it to your local recycling center. Thanks for your cooperation.



## Most U.S. Households Pay for at Least One Streaming Service

Streaming is now mainstream. A 2024 survey done by Forbes Home and OnePoll indicated that 99% of U.S. households pay for at least one streaming service—with Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Apple TV+ being most popular.

Other research puts the figure around 85%. Either way, there's been a big increase since 2015, when only about 50% of U.S. households paid for at least one streaming service. When did your household get on the streaming bandwagon? Or are you still considering whether to take that step?

Whether you've been streaming for years or are just getting started, we think you'll find these statistics interesting:

- On average, Americans pay for 2.9 streaming subscriptions every month.** For many households, this number is the “sweet spot” that provides enough streaming options for entertainment and information without having to spend too much money.
- It's estimated that 7% of Americans have six or more streaming subscriptions.** These heavy users put a high value in having access to a huge variety of movies, series, documentaries, and more.
- Americans spend an average of three hours and nine minutes a day streaming digital media.** That's a substantial amount of time, equivalent to working a part-time job!
- Netflix is the biggest streaming service in the world.** The company reported 269.6 million global paid memberships as of March 31, 2024. In second place is Amazon Prime Video.
- More than a quarter of viewers admit to binge-watching at least once a week.** In fact, the ability to watch an entire season of a favorite series in a single day or weekend is one reason streaming services became so popular.
- More than half of Americans have subscribed to a streaming service to watch one program, then cancelled their subscription.** This strategy, known as streaming service rotation, allows subscribers to watch what they want and keep costs to a minimum.

For an Internet speed upgrade to enhance your streaming experience, call Runestone Telecom at 320-986-6655.

# Scholarship Opportunities for 2025 High School Seniors

We're excited to offer these scholarship opportunities to families with high school seniors in our service area:

## THREE NEW SCHOLARSHIPS TO SUPPORT TELECOMMUNICATIONS OR IT

The Minnesota Telecom Alliance (MTA) Foundation, in partnership with the Network and Plant Operations Peer Group, is offering three \$1,000 scholarships to support eligible students pursuing a career in Telecommunications or Information Technology (IT).

To be eligible, applicants must be a high school senior with plans to major in either Telecommunications or Information Technology (IT) at a university, college, or technical college and be a Minnesota resident. They must also either be employed by an active MTA member company or have a parent who's employed by an active MTA member company.

Visit [www.runestone.net](http://www.runestone.net) for the application and more information.

## SCHOLARSHIPS FROM MINNESOTA TELECOM ALLIANCE (MTA) AND FOUNDATION FOR RURAL SERVICE (FRS)

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, vocational or 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

Visit [www.runestone.net](http://www.runestone.net) and refer to the scholarships banner ad for links to MTA and FRS details and applications, which must be returned to Runestone Telecom Association by February 14th, 2025. 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.



## Simplify Things With eBill and AutoPay

We're all looking for ways to make life a little easier, and Runestone Telecom does that by offering you eBill for more security, lower costs, and less time required. With eBill, no check writing or postage is necessary — pay online in seconds with your credit or debit card.

For even more convenience, choose AutoPay and we'll automatically deduct your bill amount on the 20th of the month from the account you designate.

Visit [www.runestone.net](http://www.runestone.net) to sign up. Call 320-986-2013 for help.

## See TV Guide

You can always find the most up to date show listings on our website at [www.runestone.net](http://www.runestone.net) > Cable Television > Additional Services > TV Guide or scan this QR code to go directly to the TV Guide. You may also opt to purchase a subscription directly from [www.tvguidemagazine.com](http://www.tvguidemagazine.com).



## The Look of Your Cable Television Bill Will Change

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has implemented an “all-in” rule, which requires Cable Television service providers to simplify the way their pricing is presented to the public. To put it simply, the “all-in” rule ensures that the price you see is the price you pay, with all associated fees and charges accounted for in one total price.

While Runestone Telecom has always advertised “all-in” pricing, our billing system previously divided the monthly charge into two-line items, detailing the different programming costs that make up your overall monthly charge:

- **Cable TV Programming** – This is the portion that the networks charge Runestone Telecom to broadcast their content to our customers. This amount fluctuates annually and is determined through contract negotiations with the individual networks.
- **RTA Portion** – This is the portion that we charge to cover the cost to maintain the equipment required to broadcast cable television service to our customers. The Runestone Telecom portion of your bill has not had a price increase since April 2014, and we have no plans to increase this charge for the foreseeable future.

**With the new “all-in” pricing requirement, these two-line items on your bill will be combined into one line item, beginning with your March 2025 bill. As always, if you have questions regarding any portion of your bill, please call 320-986-2013 to speak with a member of our local office staff.**

## Gophers Cause Damage South of Cyrus

Gophers have teeth that grow continuously, so they need to gnaw on hard objects to keep their teeth in check. Unfortunately, this means they sometimes damage underground fiber-optic cables, which happened to Runestone Telecom at the end of December 2024.

The time required for repairs can vary significantly when dealing with gopher-related issues. Troubleshooting often takes just as long as the actual repair work. On average, our crews need at least two hours on-site to determine the location of the fault between two pedestals or between the house and a pedestal. This process involves using an OTDR (Optical Time Domain Reflectometer) to measure the distance from the OTDR to the fault.

Once measurements are taken from both ends, we use the footage readings to locate the cable on the ground. A walk wheel is then used to measure from each direction, and the overlap between the readings — typically 10 to 50 feet — is split to pinpoint the digging location. We then dig to expose the damaged area, which is followed by splicing, which takes one hour to more than 24 hours, depending on cable size and weather conditions.

For this particular repair south of Cyrus, everything went exceptionally well. The technician had already conducted testing and measurements the night before, so when the crew arrived with the backhoe, the prep work was complete. The damaged portion was only two feet off from the estimated measurements, making it quick to locate. The weather was ideal — 30 degrees, no wind, and overcast — allowing our crew to work comfortably without gloves, and the frozen ground surface stayed solid without turning to mud. This particular fix was completed within three hours and affected just one customer.



*On December 30, 2024, we had the first outage caused by gophers this winter. Our crew repaired the damage and had the customer back online in a few hours.*