

Connections

DECEMBER 2025

Serving You Is a Gift All Year Long

During this holiday season of giving, Runestone Telecom wants you to know what a gift it is to help keep you connected to what matters most. We enjoy providing communications services to you, and we cherish participating with you in community activities. Happy holidays to you and your loved ones! Enjoy this time of year, and we'll see you in the next one.

Office Closures for the Holidays

Our office will be closed on Thursday, December 25th; Friday, December 26th; Thursday, January 1st; and Friday, January 2nd so that we may celebrate the holidays with our families. Trouble calls will be handled by on-call technicians.

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

24/7 HelpDesk for Internet
Outages and Technical Support:
320-986-6655
helpdesk@runestone.net

Visit Us: www.runestone.net

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Runestone
Telecom Association

KEEP YOUR WIFI

MERRY AND BRIGHT



The holidays bring more than good cheer. They also bring extra family, extra devices, and extra demand on your WiFi. Between streaming holiday movies, video calls with loved ones, and gaming marathons, your router is working overtime!

If your router is more than a few years old, it might be slowing things down. Most routers should be replaced every **3–5 years** to keep up with new technology and faster Internet speeds.

With **Runestone Telecom Internet**, you're already covered. Our **managed router** is included with your service and built to handle busy households. Plus, our **IT team can remotely access and troubleshoot** your router right from our office, keeping your connection strong and reliable when it matters most.

Planning for extra guests (and extra devices) this season? It might be the perfect time to **consider a speed upgrade** so everyone can stream, scroll, and socialize without a glitch.

Stay merry and stay connected — the Runestone Telecom way.

Reminder on Capital Credit Checks

Capital Credit checks were mailed out to our cooperative members in mid-November, refunding approximately \$2,000,000. These checks were based on the remainder of 2006 and 30% of 2024. Refund amounts of \$50 and under were applied to active customer accounts. Please make sure we have your current mailing address, especially if you use eBill or paperless billing. If you haven't received a check or haven't noticed a credit on your December bill, please call our office 320-986-2013.

What Are Symmetrical Internet Speeds?

The Internet is a two-way street. Download speed is how quickly you pull data from the Internet to your device, and upload speed is how fast you can send data from your device to the Internet.

Symmetrical speeds mean that your upload and download speeds are the same. For example, if you have a 300 Mbps symmetrical Internet plan, both your download and upload speeds are 300 Mbps. Fiber is the only broadband type capable of symmetrical speeds. By comparison, cable or DSL services generally offer high download speeds but much slower upload speeds.

If you work from home, upload speeds are critical. They boost video conferencing quality, reduce the time to upload files, and improve cloud-based applications and backup services like Google Drive, Dropbox, and iCloud. In addition, smart home security cameras require fast upload speeds to stream what they capture and enable you to watch while you're away.

Runestone Telecom's fiber Internet plans offer symmetrical speeds. Visit www.runestone.net for details.



Streaming Content Overload Is Becoming Common

Is there too much of a good thing when it comes to streaming? A 2024 Talker Research survey of 2,000 American streaming service subscribers found that the average person spends about 110 hours per year, which is nearly five full days, scrolling through streaming platforms and struggling to find something to watch.

What's more, one in five of those survey respondents believe it's more difficult to find something to watch today than it was 10 years ago. The ever-increasing number of streaming services and titles can lead to viewers feeling frustrated by all the choices. The streaming landscape was once dominated by Netflix, but has since exploded with many different media, entertainment, and technology companies throwing their hats in the ring.

How many total titles are out there on streaming services? The list of unique titles has surpassed 800,000 in the U.S. alone. Did you know Prime Video offers free viewing of over 25,000 movies and TV shows with an Amazon Prime membership? Its total catalog, including titles available for purchase or rent, numbers over 60,000.

While the majority of subscribers appreciate streaming service algorithms for providing accurate title recommendations to them, about half simultaneously admit feeling overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of suggested content.

In addition to streaming content overload, another challenge that's been identified is subscriber fatigue. It's defined as the drain people feel when having to manage multiple streaming subscriptions, each with its own login, interface, and billing cycle.

Despite it all, subscribers still love their experience with streaming services and viewership continues to climb. One strategy many people use is to pick a multi-season series and stick with it for weeks (or even months). That way, you're not faced with the "What should we watch?" question as frequently.

How ChatGPT Can Help With the Holidays

The holiday season is often hectic due to all the extra activities involved. Fortunately, the AI chatbot ChatGPT can lighten your load and help make things a little easier. Just think of ChatGPT, available at chatgpt.com, as your virtual elf.

Need gift ideas? Tell ChatGPT about the person you're shopping for and your budget, and it will suggest thoughtful gift options. It can also generate comparisons of products or prices across different retailers.

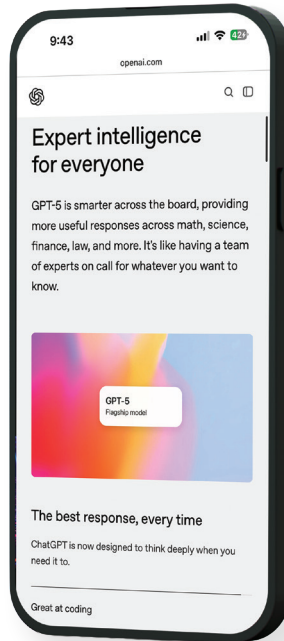
Hosting dinner? Get delicious holiday recipes just seconds after entering your prompt, including ideas to accommodate dietary restrictions.

Searching for a playlist? ChatGPT can generate playlists based on your preferences, mood, desired genre, and even the specific activities you'll be doing (such as decorating the tree or baking cookies).

Want to make things extra magical? Let the kids chat with "Santa" himself. ChatGPT can role-play and keep the Christmas spirit alive.

Interested in custom holiday cards? Ask ChatGPT to design one with prompts like "make an image of a reindeer and gingerbread man having fun sledding through a winter wonderland."

The best way to get comfortable with ChatGPT is to play around with it and try different prompts. It's fun to see what results you get! We encourage you to let ChatGPT reduce stress and add cheer to the weeks ahead.



Gary Ness Celebrates Milestone Anniversary

Gary Ness, Network Technician, has been with Runestone Telecom for 30 years!

When asked if it feels like it's been that long, Gary smiled and said, "It's gone by really fast and has been good."

Three decades of dedication, knowledge, and steady service have made Gary an essential part of the RTA team. We're grateful for his commitment and the many ways he's helped keep our network—and our communities—connected. Thank you, Gary, and congratulations on reaching this milestone!



Help Families in Need During the 77th Annual Jingle Bells Telethon

The 77th Annual Jingle Bells Telethon will air on Runestone Cable TV channel 6 on December 6th from 5–10 pm. We're excited to bring you this live local event, which raises money for nearly 900 families in need over the holidays and provides additional support throughout the year.

You can also watch this event live and make a donation at www.jinglebellsalexandria.org.



FRS Scholarship Reminder

Have a high school senior in the family? Make sure they know about Runestone Telecom's scholarship opportunities offered through the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS). Applications must be received by FRS no later than February 14th, 2026. Visit www.runestone.net for details.

News for Our Cable TV Subscribers

Do you subscribe to one of Runestone Telecom's Cable TV packages? If so, please review this customer information.

Channel Name Change

Channel 36 - MSNBC has changed its name to MS NOW as of November 15th.

Cable TV Rate Adjustment

Beginning January 1st, 2026, Runestone Cable TV rates will increase slightly.

- **Broadcast** will increase from \$42.82 to \$46.66.
- **Basic** will increase from \$98.01 to \$102.00.

We work hard to keep your rates as low as possible, but the fees we're charged by channel providers continue to rise each year. These adjustments help ensure we can continue delivering your favorite channels and dependable local service.

Thank you for being part of the Runestone Telecom community. We truly appreciate your loyalty and understanding.

New Members

Welcome to Runestone Telecom! We're pleased to have you with our cooperative.

Elbow Lake

Kaiser, Sandra Dee 218-685-4150

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!



When you think of a "gamer," you probably don't think of a senior citizen. However, Entertainment Software Association (ESA) data from 2025 indicates there are 57 million Americans over 50 who game — a cohort that represents 28% of the approximately 205 million total U.S. gamers. Nearly half of Americans in their 60s and 70s play some form of PC, mobile, or console video game every week, as do 36% of people in their 80s.

In addition to being a fun form of entertainment, gaming offers seniors other important benefits including these:

Better Emotional Well-being — Research shows that gaming reduces stress and increases life satisfaction. For seniors, video games provide enjoyable challenges and social connections that can lift spirits and create a sense of community.

Improved Physical Performance — Games that require physical interaction, such as the VR game Beat Saber, Nintendo Switch Sports, and other motion-controlled titles, can help seniors improve balance, coordination, and reflexes. These benefits come from the quick decision-making and rapid movements involved in gameplay.

Enhanced Cognitive Ability — A study published by the National Institute on Aging found that video games can significantly improve memory function in older adults experiencing age-related cognitive decline. The research showed that video games provide novel environments that stimulate the hippocampus, the brain region critical for memory. For seniors who may be homebound, these virtual environments offer an engaging way to keep their brains active and healthy.

Playing video games exercises a gamer's memory, especially short-term memory. Playing even occasionally can help seniors remember things like names, addresses, phone numbers, dates, and times better than they do without video game stimulation. They also force players to switch quickly between different tasks, which can lead to increased mental flexibility and multi-tasking ability.

If you're planning to level up your gaming, you may need to upgrade your Internet service. Visit www.runestone.net to learn more.