Connections

APRIL 2026

Handy Reminders

- Conveniently pay your bill with eBill and AutoPay.

- Pay your bill by the 20th of the month to avoid late fees and disconnection. Please don't use staples to attach your checks.

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

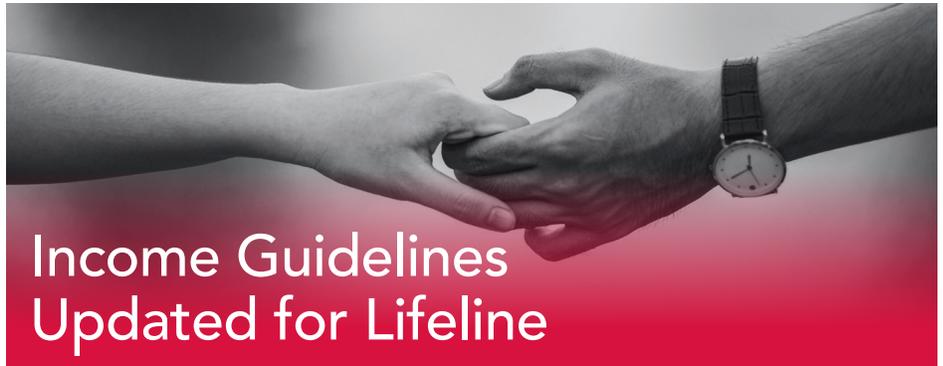**24/7 HelpDesk for Internet Outages and Technical Support:**
320-986-6655
helpdesk@runestone.net

Visit Us: www.runestone.net

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!

Runestone
Telecom Association

Income Guidelines Updated for Lifeline

Lifeline is a federal program from the FCC that helps make phone and Internet service more affordable for eligible low-income households. The program provides up to a $9.25 monthly discount on service for qualifying subscribers (or up to $34.25 per month on Tribal lands). Only one Lifeline benefit is allowed per household.

Eligibility is based on income or participation in certain federal assistance programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, SSI, Federal Public Housing Assistance, or Veterans Pension benefits.

Income guidelines for Lifeline were recently updated for 2026. To see the current income chart and find out if you qualify, **visit: www.lifelinesupport.org/do-i-qualify**

Please note that while you may qualify for the monthly Lifeline discount, Runestone Telecom is unfortunately not able to offer it to customers in these areas: Dumont, Herman, Wheaton, Alexandria, Forada, Holmes City, Villard, and Stearns County. If you are a cellular phone customer with another company, you may be able to apply this discount to your bill.

If you have questions about applying for Lifeline or adding the benefit to your service, contact Runestone Telecom at 320-986-2013.

TAP Fee Update

The TAP Surcharge will decrease from $.03 to $.00 effective April 1, 2026.

FUSC Fee

FUSC will decrease from 37.6% to 37.0% effective April 1st.

New Members

Alexandria
The Outskirts Bar & Grill....320-391-9014

Donnelly
Frank, Brad.........................320-246-2231

Wheaton
Stahlecker, Zane................320-422-1157

April is Packed With Pivotal Moments in History

How many of these questions about historical events in April can you answer?

What began on April 19, 1775?
The U.S. Revolutionary War

What happened in Washington DC on April 14, 1865?
President Abraham Lincoln was shot by actor and Confederate sympathizer John Wilkes Booth. Lincoln died the next morning, becoming the first U.S. president to be assassinated.

What jolted people awake on April 18, 1906?
The San Francisco earthquake

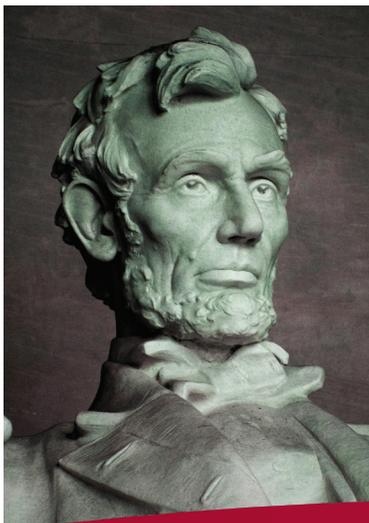**What took place in the North Atlantic on April 14, 1912?**
The Titanic struck an iceberg.

What famous book was released on April 13, 1953?
On that day, British writer Ian Fleming published *Casino Royale*, the first of 12 books featuring secret agent James Bond.

What happened in the Soviet Union on April 26, 1986?
The Chernobyl nuclear explosion

Why a Passphrase Can Be Better Than a Password

What's the difference between a passphrase and a password? They're both used to gain secure access to a device, computer, account, or network, but their structure varies.

You can think of a passphrase as a short sentence with four or more words and at least 15 characters, such as *PurpleElephantsSlidingOverClouds*. By contrast, a password is usually shorter, around 10 characters, and a more complicated mix of letters, numbers, and characters, such as *4jli$oju?A*.

Here are four reasons why using a passphrase can be a better choice:

1. **Passphrases are easier for users to remember than passwords.** A random collection of numbers and symbols can be difficult to keep track of, which can mean that users often make passwords dangerously simple in order to remember them, such as *password123*. Since a passphrase is a short sentence, it can be memorized easily.

2. **Passphrases are more difficult to crack through brute force attacks.** Many password-cracking tools can successfully figure out 10-character passwords, and humans may even be able to guess them. Since passphrases are longer, they tend to be more secure and safer from these tools.

3. **Passphrases are widely accepted.** Most major applications and OS (operating systems) allow for up to 127 characters and the use of passphrases for optimal security.

4. **Passphrases can easily satisfy complex rules and requirements for passwords.** Most passphrases allow for punctuation and uppercase and lowercase letters.

Creating a passphrase is a straightforward task. Select four to 10 words and form a unique (even nonsensical) sentence of at least 15 characters. It could be a variation on a favorite song lyric or a reference to an inside joke. To add more complexity, consider changing some letters into numbers or characters and including random capitalization. For example, using the previous passphrase example, it could become *PurplEElephantSSlidinGOveRCloud$*.

Are You Having Trouble Using the Telephone Due to a Hearing or Speech Disability?

Minnesota Relay is a free telephone service that uses specially trained communications assistants to facilitate telephone calls between people with hearing and speech disabilities and other individuals. Calls can be made to anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. All calls are completely confidential. To make a relay call dial 7-1-1. Once connected to the relay service, tell the communications assistant the type of relay call you wish to make. Or, you may dial the specific toll-free number for the type of relay service.

Types of Relay Services Available

Captioned Telephone Service (CTS)
CTS uses a special telephone with a text display screen so that a person who is hard of hearing can listen to and read captions of everything the other person on the call says. You speak directly to the other person on the call, and a relay communications assistant transcribes everything the other person says into captions, which appear on the display screen of your CTS phone.

Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS)
Internet-based forms of CTS are available for those who would like to use CTS on a computer, tablet, or smartphone. Go to: https://www.fcc.gov/ipcts.

Computer (ASCII): 1-800-627-3529
Computer users can access Minnesota Relay. Set your communications software to the following protocols: speeds ranging from 300 to 2400; 8 Bits; No Parity; 1 Stop Bit; Full Duplex. When calling at a rate of 300 or below, follow the above using Half Duplex.

Hearing Carry Over (HCO): 1-800-627-3529
HCO allows a person who can hear clearly but who has very limited or no speech capability to make phone calls. Using a special text telephone, you type your conversation for the relay communications assistant to read to the other person, and listen directly to the other person's response.

Hearing User: 1-800-627-3529
A hearing person may use a standard telephone or mobile phone to place a relay call and speak with a person who is deaf, hard of hearing, or speech disabled.

Internet Protocol (IP) Relay
IP Relay combines text-based relay service with the ease of the Internet – no need for a TTY. You can make your relay call using a computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone. Go to: https://www.fcc.gov/ip-relay.

Spanish Relay: 1-877-627-5448
Spanish speaking persons with a hearing or speech disability can make relay calls. This is not a translation service – both parties must speak Spanish, and at least one party must have a hearing or speech disability.

Speech-to-Speech (STS): 1-877-627-3848
STS allows a person who has difficulty speaking or being understood on the phone to communicate using his or her own voice or voice synthesizer. The communications assistant revoices your words so that the other person on the call can understand them, and the other person speaks directly to you.

Text Telephone (TTY): 1-800-627-3529
This service allows a person who is deaf, deafblind, or speech disabled to use a TTY to communicate with the other person on the call.

Video Relay Service (VRS)
VRS allows a person who uses American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate over the phone. The VRS user connects to the relay communications assistant via an Internet-enabled device with a video camera. The communications assistant relays the conversation back and forth between the parties – in ASL with the VRS user and by voice with the called party. Go to: https://www.fcc.gov/vrs.

Voice Carry Over (VCO): 1-877-627-3024
VCO allows a person with a hearing disability, but who wants to use his or her own voice, to speak directly to the other party. The communications assistant then types the other party's response, which is displayed on the VCO user's text telephone.

For More Information on Minnesota Relay Services
www.mnrelay.org • 1-800-657-3775

Emergency Assistance
TTY callers should dial 9-1-1 directly in an emergency. All 9-1-1 centers are equipped to handle TTY calls. Minnesota Relay can process emergency calls, but this may delay the response to your call.

To File a Complaint Regarding Minnesota Relay
1-800-657-3775
Email: mn.relay@state.mn.us
You will need to provide: the date and time of the relay call, the calling from and to phone numbers, the CA's identification number, and the nature of your complaint.

You also file a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission
consumercomplaints.fcc.gov
Voice: 1-888-225-5322
TTY: 1-888-835-5322
ASL via VP: 1-844-432-2275

Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program
The TED Program provides free specialized telecommunications equipment to income eligible Minnesotans who are having trouble using the telephone due to a hearing, speech, or physical disability.
mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing
Voice: 1-800-657-3663
ASL via VP: 651-964-1514

We're Proud to Boost the Local Economy

Runestone Telecom does more than keep our customers connected with Internet and related services. We also help boost the local economy by making direct economic contributions, enhancing business growth, and supporting community organizations and events.

Our direct economic contributions include hiring local residents for technical, customer service, and administrative jobs. We also purchase supplies, fuel, and services from other local businesses to keep money circulating locally, as well as pay local property and business taxes to help fund community services.

Local business growth is aided by our fast and reliable fiber Internet. It makes our communities more appealing to new businesses and remote workers, boosts property values and tax revenue, and enables local entrepreneurs and creators to thrive.

To thrive, every community must be an enjoyable place to live and offer the activities that increase quality of life. That's why we regularly sponsor local events, sports teams, schools, and nonprofits.

To learn more about our community involvement, visit www.runestone.net.

Plan for Connectivity When You Build or Remodel

Before construction begins on a new build or remodel, plans are made for electrical wiring, plumbing, and HVAC. Yet builders, contractors, and homeowners sometimes forget to also plan for Internet connectivity, which is as essential to a home as electricity, running water, and temperature control.

As your local Internet service provider, Runestone Telecom reminds you not to wait until the drywall goes up to decide where your network cables should go. Remember, you only get one chance to run cables inside your walls without drywall destruction.

Here's what can happen if you don't plan ahead for connectivity:

- If no wiring was run to the ideal location in the home for a router, the router ends up being installed in a poor location — typically in a basement — which reduces WiFi coverage and can create dead zones. To improve WiFi performance, extenders must be added, which could have been eliminated with proper router placement.

- Homeowners may later want to add smart thermostats, cameras, doorbells, or lighting systems. Without wiring or network planning, poor router placement can leave these devices struggling with weak signals and dropped connections, which may require additional unsightly WiFi equipment to improve coverage.

- Homes with weak WiFi coverage can have "blind spots" for security cameras. Homeowners often don't realize this until after move-in, when retrofitting is far more difficult.

- People often set up a TV or gaming systems in a room far from the router. If wiring isn't in place, streaming 4K video or online gaming may stutter or lag, forcing them to rely on wireless fixes instead of a clean wired solution.

By anticipating the network needs of a home earlier in the process, you can gain stronger connections, experience fewer headaches, and save money. Before wiring for electrical, please call Runestone Telecom at 320-986-2013 to discuss connectivity issues.

Cable Channel Update

Cable Channel #3: The Cowboy Channel is now Cowboy Channel effective March 16, 2026.