



– COVID-19 COMMUNITY UPDATE –

As this newsletter comes out, our situations certainly have already changed as new developments occur almost daily here in Iowa during this COVID-19 pandemic.

East Buchanan Telephone Cooperative has modified current practices to protect the health of our employees, customers and the surrounding community.

Our lobby is closed to support community health, but there will still be access to drop off UPS shipments in the entry-way, and our dropbox just outside our front door for payments, applications, and anything else that needs passed along to us. We will continue normal business hours, Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. by phone 319-935-3011 or by email at help@eastbuchanan.com. We are recommending calling our office to try to handle as much business as you can over the phone or via email. Automatic Bill Pay is an easy way to avoid unnecessary late fees, respect social distancing rules, and there's no need for a postage stamp!

As Governor Reynolds has placed further restrictions on Region 6, we have implemented further precautions for our customers and staff. We will no longer enter a customer's premise except for an absolute emergency. Our technicians are trained to assist customers and troubleshoot remotely via video chat – social distancing at its best.

FREE WI-FI

We have also added FREE Wi-Fi hot spots in our communities to assist customers during this unusual time. They are located in Quasqueton by our building at the corner of Dubuque and 3rd Street; in Winthrop on the south side of our office, in Aurora north of the fire station, and in Stanley behind Iowa Farm Automation. We ask that you stay in your vehicles so as to respect social distancing rules, and we also remind you that this is an unsecure network – do not use this to conduct any personal business or banking.

CONNECTING TO THE FUTURE WITH FIBER

In 2018, EBTC buried fiber optic cable in the rural areas of Stanley and in 2019 in the rural areas of Aurora, allowing rural customers to have access to faster Internet speeds as town customers currently enjoy. The EBTC Board and our employees have worked hard to bring world-class speeds to our customers in these first two phases of construction. But fiber construction is extremely expensive – well over \$1.5 million dollars in fiber optics have been invested so far to serve our customers. This current pandemic has customers using record amounts of Internet data (aka bandwidth), and serves as a good reminder of the need to eliminate the “digital divide” between rural and town customers.

What is fiber and why the big deal?

Fiber optic cable is a hair-thin hollow strand of glass tubing with a mirror coating on the inside allowing beams of light that carry data to be reflected off the sides and provide speed-of-light connectivity! Fiber optic cables are the future of data technology and a single strand can easily carry as much data as over 800 pairs of copper wire while providing Internet capacity for years to come!

Over a decade ago customers were marveling at 10 Mg Internet speeds available to them and today many customers still have the same Internet speed. But in today’s world, 10 Mg can scarcely provide a video call or

allow a customer to enjoy a movie without buffering. Fiber optic cable that EBTC has deployed allows for speeds 70-80x faster! If you already have fiber to your home or business – or even if you don’t – call our office to see what speeds are available to you for worry-free Internet for telecommuting, telemedicine, and tele-education during the pandemic.

It’s important to remember that your Internet experience is only as good as the slowest link in the route from your home to where you’re connecting whether it’s to Netflix, Amazon, YouTube, or the millions of other websites worldwide. That’s why it’s so important to deploy fiber to assure that the “last mile connection” provided by EBTC is not the slowest link in your virtual connection to the world.

Fiber optic cable is much more fragile than copper wires, therefore it’s more important than ever to dial 8-1-1 Iowa One Call to locate underground utilities whenever you prepare to dig. Calling Iowa One Call 48 hours in advance of disturbing the soil may allow you to avoid liability should a line be cut – but more importantly calling Iowa One Call may avoid disruption of 911 circuits for emergency responders and save you the cost of fiber optic repairs! Call Iowa One Call – it’s the law!

From your porch, to your home office, to the far corners of your basement or upstairs, East Buchanan Telephone Cooperative makes it possible for you to enjoy your reliable secure and fast EBTC Internet connection everywhere in and around your home!

After the pandemic subsides, we will perform an on-site analysis to suggest improvements and recommend additional WiFi access points or mesh WiFi if necessary. Once a plan is in place, our technicians will position a high-quality Wi-Fi SmartRG router, additional access points and basically everything needed to have WiFi wherever you are at home.

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG!

Iowa One Call toll-free: **1-800-292-8989**

You must call **AT LEAST TWO DAYS**
before you begin digging



NOTICE:

Effective May 1, 2020, the EBTC labor rates have increased to \$55.00 per hour.