



Bell Ringer

Volume 60, No 4 August 2026
Clear Lake, South Dakota 57226

GET YOUR HOME CONNECTED FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR

As summer winds down and students head back to the classroom, many families are preparing for a busy school year. From homework assignments and online research to educational apps and video streaming, today's students rely on technology more than ever before. Now is the perfect time to make sure your home network is ready to keep up.

A good first step is making sure your home Wi-Fi is ready for the demands of a busy school year. With smartphones, tablets, laptops, gaming systems, smart TVs, and other connected devices all sharing the same network, keeping everything running smoothly can be a challenge. ITC's Blast Wi-Fi service simplifies the experience with an easy-to-use app that gives you greater visibility and control over your home network, so you can monitor connected devices and manage your Wi-Fi from anywhere. Following ITC's Annual Meeting in September, members subscribed to 1 GIG Internet or higher with Blast Wi-Fi will receive ExperienceIQ® (for no additional cost), a powerful tool that helps families manage screen time, filter content, and control device access.

It's also important to think about Wi-Fi coverage. If certain areas of your home have weak signals, family members may experience slow speeds, buffering, or dropped connections. Placing your router in a central location or adding a mesh unit can help improve coverage and performance.

Back-to-school season is also a great time to review online safety habits. Encourage family members to use strong passwords, be cautious when clicking links in emails or texts, and think carefully before sharing personal information online.

Finally, take a moment to evaluate whether your Internet package still fits your family's needs. Now may be a great time to explore faster options. Today's households often have multiple people online simultaneously for schoolwork, video calls, streaming, gaming, and smart home devices. Upgrading to a faster package can help ensure everyone has the speed they need for a smoother online experience.

At ITC, we're here to help you get the most from your technology. If you have questions about your home Wi-Fi or Internet service, give us a call at 1.800.417.8667. Here's to a successful and connected school year!

FIBER-FAST INTERNET PACKAGES

EXPLORER

Best for basic Internet surfers, occasional streamers.

Speeds up to 500M/500M*
\$64.95/mo

MULTITASKER

Best for online gaming, video streaming, working remotely.

Speeds up to 1GIG/1GIG*
\$79.95/mo

MAXIMIZER

Best for multiple gamers, large file up/downloads, heavy streamers.

Speeds up to 2GIG/2GIG*
\$114.95/mo

MAXIMIZER +

Best for 8K Streamers, VR, massive data transfers.

Speeds up to 5GIG/5GIG*
\$174.95/mo



*These new Internet speeds are not currently available in every service area. We're working to upgrade our network community by community. The upgraded speeds will become available as upgrades are completed.

GOLDEN RULES FOR CYBER SECURITY

By Michael Martinell, Network Broadband Technician

Over the past few months, we've covered quite a few different tactics that criminals use to try to scam you. While criminals constantly change their methods, these industry-standard rules will help protect your identity and money.

- **Spot artificial urgency.** Scammers try to rush you. They threaten you with arrest. They tell you not to hang up. They say not to talk to your family or friends. These are always scams. Do not say another word. Not even "goodbye." Hang up immediately.
- **Do not call phone numbers that pop up on your screen.** Real companies will never show flashing pop-ups with a phone number and demand you call them to fix a virus or computer problem. If you see one, close it and ignore it.
- **Never grant remote access to unsolicited callers.** Legitimate support does use remote tools to help troubleshoot issues, but companies like ITC will never call you out of the blue and ask you to download AnyDesk, TeamViewer, or similar software. If anyone does, hang up immediately. This gives scammers full control of your device.
- **Don't buy a gift card for the government.** The IRS, FDIC, Medicare, or law enforcement will never call and ask you to send money via wire transfer, gift cards, Venmo, or cryptocurrency.
- **Use strong, unique passwords or passphrases.** Avoid reusing the same password across sites. A memorable passphrase or short sentence from a favorite movie or song, including numbers and symbols, works well. Example: llovery2dogs!
- **Enable Two-Factor Authentication (2FA or MFA).** Turn it on for your email, banking, and other important accounts. Even if scammers steal your password, they still need the second code sent to your phone.
- **Create a family code word for emergencies.** Scammers now use AI to mimic voices and claim a grandchild is in trouble. Agree on a secret code word known only to your family to verify real emergencies.
- **Think before you click.** Never click links or open attachments in unexpected emails or texts, even if they look official. Hover over links to check the real web address, or type it manually. When in doubt, contact the company directly through their official website or phone number.
- **Don't lie to the bank teller.** If anyone tells you to lie to the teller or use certain words when speaking to them, it's a scam. Bank staff ask verification questions to protect your money.

If you receive an unexpected email, your screen suddenly freezes, or a pop-up you can't close appears, don't panic. Talk to someone you trust before taking any action. Remember, we're here to help. Call ITC at 1.800.417.8667 during business hours or our 24/7 help desk at 1.888.217.5718.

SAVE THE DATE

By Holly Stormo, Marketing Communications Specialist

Here are five great reasons to attend the ITC Annual Meeting on Wednesday, September 9!

1. Enjoy a Complimentary Meal - Come hungry! Before the business meeting begins, enjoy a delicious meal while visiting with friends, neighbors, ITC employees, and fellow Cooperative members.
2. Win Great Prizes - Who doesn't love the chance to win? Throughout the evening, we'll announce drawing winners, followed by our exciting grand prize drawings at the conclusion of the meeting.
3. Stay Informed - Learn about ITC's accomplishments over the past year, our financial performance, and the investments we're making to continue providing reliable, future-ready communications services.
4. Have Your Voice Heard - As a member-owner of the Cooperative, your participation matters. This year's meeting includes an important bylaw update that members will have the opportunity to vote on.
5. Connect with Your Cooperative - Meet the Board of Directors, management team, and ITC employees who work every day to keep your services running. The Annual Meeting is a great opportunity to ask questions, share feedback, and see firsthand how your Cooperative is working for you.

We hope you'll join us on Wednesday, September 9! Registration begins at 4:00 PM, dinner is served at 5:00 PM, and the business meeting starts at 5:45 p.m. We look forward to seeing you there!

THE 2027 ITC PHONE BOOK

ITC is currently working on the 2027 Phone Book. If you are an ITC customer with phone service, you will receive a physical copy of the ITC Phone Book annually. For those who don't have phone service or prefer to browse online, visit www.localsolution.com. You can find businesses and people by typing in the top search bar. It's easy, and you can access it from anywhere!

If you would like to make a change to your listing, please contact ITC at 1.800.417.8667.

ITC PAYS GROSS RECEIPTS TAXES

Interstate Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc. will be paying the 2025 Gross Receipts Taxes of \$947,240.52. These taxes are due before August 1. Gross Receipts Taxes are paid to the State of South Dakota. The state will then disperse them to the appropriate school districts. No Gross Receipts Taxes are paid in the state of Minnesota. Real Estate Taxes are paid instead, with this year's amount totaling \$1,472.00. The Minnesota taxes were paid this past March.