



MONTHLY NEWS

WORLD-CLASS TECHNOLOGY. UNRIVALED LOCAL SERVICE.

April 2023

Top News Inside

- 2023 Annual Meeting
- Directory
- NTCA
- New Area Code
- TV Entertainment

VC Co-op's Annual Meeting Thursday April 27, 2023 at 1:00 pm

Happy Spring! It is that time of year when the cooperative will hold its Annual Meeting. The 2023 Annual Meeting of Vernon Communications Cooperative will be held on Thursday, April 27, at 1:00 pm. **The meeting is virtual, and online preregistration for this meeting is required.** Registration instructions and voting credentials will be available on the cooperative's website, **www.vernoncom.coop**, after April 1, 2023. Information required for preregistration are the cooperative member's name, account number and email address. A phone number is added for optional contact information in the event that updated meeting information needs to be forwarded to registrants. *Members that register and attend the meeting will receive a \$25.00 bill credit, which will appear on your May statement.*

Voting by electronic means is permitted in the cooperative's bylaws and will take place during the meeting. The meeting will proceed in the usual manner with updates on the cooperative's financial status, state of the cooperative and scholarship recipients will be announced.

Director positions for Genoa (District 1), Readstown/Liberty Pole (District 2), and Viola/Yuba (District 3) are up for election and ballots will be sent by mail to members in those Districts. Ballots will be counted on April 26, 2023 and will be announced at the Annual Meeting.

We look forward to providing information about our great cooperative and hope you can attend.

DIRECTORY

The 2023 VC Co-op telephone directory will be published soon! Pinnacle Marketing is the new publisher for our directory. If you need to make any changes to your listing, please contact us by April 18, 2023.

NTCA

Did you know?

NTCA is the Rural Broadband Association that Vernon Communications is a member. NTCA represents more than 850 independent, family owned and community-based telecommunications companies throughout the nation. It's members build and deliver broadband connectivity and operate essential services in rural America.

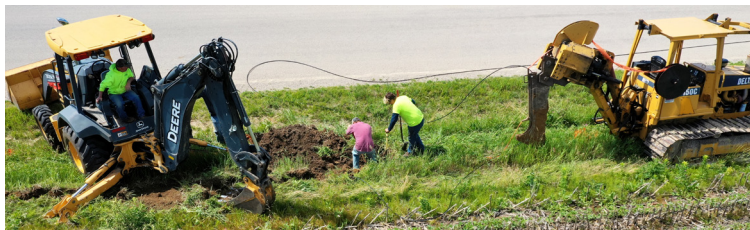
Fun Facts:

Today, the internet powers our modern economy and keeps us connected to our family, friends, school, work and more. Broadband is essential, and NTCA is focused on connecting more people and businesses across rural America to fast, affordable and reliable internet service over future-proof networks.

Did you know that three-quarters of NTCA members' customers can receive downstream speeds greater than 100 Mbps, and over 55% have access to 1 Gbps or higher? *Did you know that VC Co-op offers bandwidth speeds over 100 x100 Mbps?*

Additional facts about rural America and broadband that may surprise you:

- Collectively, America's small, independent telecom companies provide broadband service to one third of the country's land mass and contribute billions of dollars into the U.S. economy each year. The economic value of broadband access in rural America is enormous, and rural online transactions account for roughly \$1.4 trillion/year. In one year, rural telecommunications companies contributed to more than 77,000 jobs and supported more than \$10 billion in economic activity.
- Only 11% of internet traffic is carried by wireless networks. The other 89% is supported and carried over wireline or fiber networks.



Remember.... Call Before You Dig



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.



CYBER SECURITY



What Are Shortened Links?

Have you ever clicked a link only to be redirected to another link with a longer URL? If so, you probably clicked a shortened link. URL shortening occurs when a URL is swapped out for a shorter link that redirects you back to the original link. Shortened links first appeared in the early 2000s but became more popular with the rise of Twitter. Today, shortened links are commonly used to track marketing and social media campaigns.

How Do Cybercriminals Use Shortened Links?

Unfortunately, cybercriminals discovered that shortened links can make malicious links look safe to click. Shortened links hide the real URL, and many URL shortener's also change the domain when generating a shortened link. Since the real URL isn't visible, users can't see the red flags that might prevent them from clicking a link.

For example, cybercriminals repurposed LinkedIn redirect links, or "slinks", to steal users' credentials. Slinks are typically used to track marketing campaigns on LinkedIn while also letting companies link out to their websites. Since all slinks use the LinkedIn domain, they are unlikely to be blocked by anti-spam or anti-malware filters. Users are also more likely to click slinks because LinkedIn is a trusted website. Cybercriminals use slinks to redirect users to a fake login page and then steal any credentials the users enter on the page.

Hints and Tips to Stay Safe

- Always think before you click! Remember that you should never click a link that you weren't expecting.
- Become familiar with popular URL shortener tools. For example, Bitly and TinyURL are two common URL shortener's. If you see a link with bit.ly or tinyurl at the beginning of the link, you can assume the link has been shortened.
- If you suspect a link has been shortened, use a link expander to view the full URL before you click. Expanding the URL will help you identify any potential red flags.

INTERNET SPEEDS



Are you on the right internet speed?

There are many factors that go into a fast internet experience and being on the correct speed is one of them. Streaming and gaming alone can take up to 100 Mbps. A family with many devices going at once, can use up much of your bandwidth speed. Streaming or gaming, Smart TV's, tablets, and security cameras use up an abundance of speed. A good target to aim for is 25 Mbps for each person in your household. So, if you live with four people, then 100 Mbps is a good speed for your household.

What can cause slow internet?

How many people in your household use the internet on a daily basis?

You want bandwidth to support all the devices that are connected. If several people in your household are using the internet at the same time and your internet seems slow, consider upgrading your speed.

How many devices do you have?

The average American household has 25 smart devices connected. Not all smart devices take up a lot of bandwidth, but together they can make a significant difference. ***For \$84.95 you can get 100 Mbps symmetrical***, which can support a family household with many devices.

In summary when may you need a faster internet speed?

- If you have multiple people in your household using the internet at the same time, using multiple devices.
- If you have many smart devices such as security or appliances, you may need faster speeds.
- You utilize your internet for video conferencing, such as working from home and attending video meetings.
- You or members of your household are "gamers" and use the internet for frequent game play.

April

April 1 - April Fools Day

April 7 - Photo Contest Due Date

April 9 - Happy Easter

April 15 - Tax Day

April 22 - Earth Day

New WI 353 Area Code

To ensure a continuing supply of telephone numbers, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin has approved an all-services overlay for the 608 area code. The 608 area code serves the southwestern portion of the state including communities such as Beloit, Janesville, La Crosse, Middleton, Monroe, Stoughton, Sun Prairie, and Wisconsin Dells. It also serves Madison, the state capital. The new 353 area code will serve the same geographic area currently served by the 608 area code.



What is an Area Code Overlay?

An overlay is the addition of another area code (353) to the same geographic region as an existing area code (608). The overlay does not require you to change your existing area code or phone number, or how you dial your calls. You will continue to dial the area code and phone number for all local calls, as you do today, within and between the 608 and 353 area codes.

Who is affected and when does the new 353 area code become effective?

Beginning September 15, 2023, customers in the 608 area code region may be assigned a number in the new 353 area code when they request new service or an additional line. Customers receiving the 353 area code will be required to dial the area code and phone number for all local calls, just as customers with telephone numbers from the 608 area code do today.

What will you need to do?

Customers in the overlay region should:

- Continue to dial 10 digits for all local calls, including calls within the same area code.
- Continue to identify your telephone number as a 10-digit number, and include the area code when giving the number to friends, family, business associates, customers, etc.
- Ensure that all services, automatic dialing equipment, or other types of equipment recognize the new 353 area code as a valid area code and continue to store or program telephone numbers as 10-digit numbers. Some examples are: stored telephone numbers in contact lists in wireless phones, PBXs, fax machines, Internet dial-up numbers, speed dialers, call forwarding settings, voicemail services, medical alert devices, safety alarm security systems and gates, ankle monitors and other similar equipment.
- Check items such as your website, personal and business stationery, printed checks, advertising materials, contact information, and your personal or pet ID tags to ensure the area code is included.

What will remain the same?

- Your telephone number, including current area code, will not change.
- The price of a call, coverage area, or other rates and services will not change due to the overlay.
- What is a local call now will remain a local call.
- You will continue to dial 10 digits for local calls within and between the overlay area codes, and 1+10 digits for long distance calls.
- You can still dial just three digits to reach 911 and 988, as well as 211, 311, 411, 511, 611, 711 or 811 if those are currently available in your community.

ENTERTAINMENT



Effective April 3, 2023 AMC Networks will rename BBC World News to BBC News

LOCAL CHANNELS



Coming in April on Local Channel 14...

Sleep in Heavenly Peace - Watch a national non profit of 50 local volunteers building 40 beds for underprivileged children that do not have beds to sleep in at night. The Wi-Vernon Co. Chapter of Heavenly Peace volunteers will build, assemble and deliver beds to families in need.

Highlights from Larryfest 2022



For the best internet experience, make sure you have a good working router.

Gigaspire Wireless Router

\$6 per month

Advantages:

- Receives Gigabit broadband data
- High-performance system (Wi-Fi 6)
- 6x6 streams of Wi-Fi



Go Green - Help protect the planet and consider SmartHub for bill paying options

- Easy access to your VC Co-op account
- View and pay your bill
- Access billing and payment history
- Update account information
- Go to vernoncom.smarthub.coop to get started



EMPLOYEE NEWS



In February, VC Co-op welcomed Tracy Budworth to the Vernon Communications team as our new Director of Marketing.

Tracy earned her degree in business marketing from the University of Wisconsin Stout in 2009. After graduating, she worked at Vernon Communications managing the local TV channels, producing videos and helping coordinate events. From there,

Tracy went to work at Cooperative Regions of Organic Producer Pools (CROPP) where she managed Organic Valley's social media, influencer marketing, editorial and advertising programs.

Tracy lives near Viroqua with her husband Rob and their two sons. When Tracy's not at work, you're likely to find her exploring the beautiful Driftless region hiking, biking, swimming, fishing or kayaking.

Employee Appreciation Day

VC Co-op employees enjoyed donuts for breakfast on Friday March 3rd in recognition of National Employee Appreciation Day. *Our employees work hard to give our members the best customer experience.*



**103 N Main Street
Westby, WI 54667**



Lobby Hours:

8:00 am - 4:30 pm (M-F)

(608) 634-3136 • www.vernoncom.coop