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VOICEWorking Together
for 30 Years

WINTER 2009

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Boards Make Changes to Video Service

The current economic downturn has taught us a few things. Don't arrive in Washington D.C to beg Congress for money in your corporate jet. When a business isn't watching its bottom line, it could be in trouble without even knowing it. Finally, look for the best value, but realize that what seems like a bargain or a "good deal" isn't always in your best interest.

As a member of a rural cooperative, you are offered services, such as high speed internet, that likely would not be available in our area if it were left up to corporate America. In addition, those services are supplied at prices that don't include a big profit for the shareholders, because the customers are the owners. The cooperative's priority is providing the technology and the reliable services our customers want.

Directors and Management Make Difficult Decision

The directors and management of the cooperatives are empathetic to the effect of recent economic conditions. Nonetheless, during a recent review of the financial bottom line of LaValle and Richland-Grant's video service, it was determined that in order to ensure the solvency of these businesses and remain consistent with the industry standards, the cooperatives needed to make some changes.

Programming Fees Part of Total Cost

Television stations (cable networks) each charge programming fees which range from a few pennies to a few dollars per month for each of our video customers. The total programming fee is most of what cooperative customers are charged for video service.

Beginning in 2009, local stations, such as La Crosse and Madison ABC, NBC, CBS, and Fox, will require contracts to retransmit their programs and most will start charging programming fees. Previously these analog stations were broadcast "over-the-air" and no fees were charged. In order to offset

these charges by the networks, LaValle and Richland-Grant will now be assessing a separate line item fee of \$1.99 for all local stations.

Programming Fees Paid by the Cooperatives Up Approximately \$14.00 — Your cost stayed the same.

It is important to understand that since 2003, the average programming fee that the cooperatives pay the cable networks increased by approximately \$14.00.

The cooperatives continued to invest in upgrades for your advantage (see the Video Recap Time Line on pages 2 & 3), general operating costs increased, and yet the rate you were charged stayed the same.

Changes in Fees Out of Our Control

Two fees, Interstate and Intrastate access, had previously been included within the amount you were charged for the Total Video packages. Since these fees are subject to changes outside of our control, they will no longer be included in the package price. So even though the Gold and Silver Total package prices will see no major changes at \$102.99 and \$92.99 respectively, moving these fees will increase the final total of your bill by \$7.55 to \$8.05 depending on which cooperative provides your service. Similar increases have been applied to all other video products. (See rate chart on page 3.)

Silver and Gold Video-Both Excellent Values

Keep in mind the features of this video service that set it apart from the rest: a solid channel line-up of the stations you watch with minimal duplication. After all, if they aren't channels you'll be watching, a couple hundred channels aren't a good deal at any price. We offer local stations available from both the Madison and La Crosse markets, optional high speed internet service with value pricing, and local service technicians available when you need them.

Finally, remember that as a member of the cooperative you are earning capital credits which will be paid back to you, a fact you'll want to consider when you check the bottom line.

■■■■■■■■■■IT's Here... HDTV Now Available

The software upgrades have been completed. The testing is done. The color and clarity of high definition is ready for you! High definition television is available to all eligible customers.*

Beginning February 1, 2009, we will offer HD Gold, a package of 17 high definition channels, including Fox Sports North, Big Ten, HD Theater, NFL Network, HD Movie, HD Net, The Outdoor Channel, A&E, ESPN HD, ESPN2, TBS, TNT, and the History Channel, as well as the HD signals from WXOW ABC La Crosse, WEAU NBC Eau Claire, WLAX Fox La Crosse, and WKBT CBS La Crosse.

An introductory monthly rate of \$5.95 will be offered until December 31, 2009. That's right, exciting crisp pictures until the end of the year for just \$5.95 per month. During 2009, the HD Gold package channel count will

continue to expand as more channels are added with the anticipated monthly rate for January 1, 2010 at just \$10.95.

You are eligible to subscribe to HD Gold only when you subscribe to one of our Gold Video packages. If you are a Silver Video subscriber who wants the high definition channels, please contact the office to verify that you wish to upgrade your package to Gold and add HD Gold.

* **There are distance and plant equipment requirements for high definition service.**

* **Customers must be Gold Video customers in order to add Gold HD.**

* **Customers are responsible for supplying their own high definition television.**



Curt Miller Celebrates 30 years with LaValle Telephone Cooperative

Curt Miller of LaValle started a part time job with LTC on June 19, 1978. He had planned to go on to school that fall but four months later he was offered a full time position and took it. Curt lives in Summit Township with his wife Laurita. He has 1 son, 2 step-sons, 2 step-daughters, and 5 grandchildren.

Over his years working at the cooperative, Curt has seen the telephone industry and his responsibilities change dramatically. Looking back, Curt said the biggest challenge he's seen in 30 years was adding Internet and TV services to the traditional phone industry.

When he's not keeping the coop network humming along, Curt enjoys working in his yard, hunting and woodworking. Thank you Curt for all the years of good service and more to come!

Last Chance: DTV Coming Soon

The long awaited, and much advertised, transition from analog to digital television signal will happen on February 17, 2009. Just for review: If all your TVs are hooked up to a cable, satellite, or LaValle Telephone or Richland-Grant Telephone video service, you are all set. We'll provide the digital signal. If not, you need TVs with integrated digital or you'll need to add a digital-to-analog converter. These converter boxes can be purchased at local electronics stores. Coupons to assist with the cost can be obtained from the federal government. Call 1-888-DTV-2009.

Scholarships Available Seniors Get Your Applications!

High school seniors, who are the children of LTC and RGTC members, are fortunate to have several scholarship opportunities available through the cooperatives. The Wisconsin State Telecommunications Foundation offers thirty scholarships, each in the amount of \$1,500, while the Foundation for Rural Service nationwide program offers thirty in the amount of \$2,500. We've had students chosen from this area, so applying may be worth the effort! In addition, both cooperatives award local scholarships. Students may obtain information from their respective school guidance counselors. Applications must be in the LTC & RGTC offices by February 23, 2009. If you have further questions, contact the school guidance counselor or either telephone office.

Video Programming and

FALL 2003	2004	2005	JUNE 2005	SUMMER 2006	OCT 2006
Video is first offered. Gold Total Package offers 79 channels. Silver Total Package offers 47 channels.	Richland-Grant & LaValle install new state of the art switching equipment. Plant construction includes miles of fiber optic cable.	Programming fees increase as channels are added. No increase passed on to customers. Gold now has 92 channels (\$102.99) & Silver has 60 channels (\$92.99).	NFL NETWORK is added.	LaValle celebrates its 50th year and RGTC celebrates 55 years of service.	LaValle updates its business office.
				The Soldiers Grove subdivision Fiber-To-The-Home project is completed for advanced services on broadband.	
				Both cooperatives added fiber optic distribution terminals. A large percentage of members are within 10,000 feet of a terminal.	
				Both cooperatives invest in additional fiber optic cable. Digital Video Recorders are now available.	
				My Network TV, & 3ABN are added to the channel line-up. CW Network replaces WB.	

† Please refer to Video Article (front page) and Rate Change article (page 3) for more detail.

Incentive Program Launched for Security Systems

It's difficult to pick up a newspaper or watch the news on television without hearing about another break-in or robbery. Repairing the damage that was caused or replacing the items that were taken in a break-in can be costly. Worse yet is the feeling that you and your family have been violated.

The cooperatives are pleased to offer a Central Station Monitoring Incentive Program. The Program is easy. Just sign up for one year and we will install up to three motion detectors or temperature sensors in your home for just \$600 (plus tax). That includes all of the equipment and labor charges.

Central Station Monitoring gives you peace of mind knowing that your home or business is being monitored 24 hours a day by a state-of-the-art, Underwriters Laboratory-listed facility. The Central Station will even alert you if there is a problem with AC power or if the batteries need to be replaced. Central Station Monitoring is just \$17.95 per month (plus tax).

Richland-Grant and La Valle Telephone Cooperatives have been installing burglar alarm systems at businesses and in residences for over 30 years. These systems monitor your premises when you are out of town or while you are asleep. Should someone attempt entry into your home or business, our central station monitoring facility will be alerted within 15 seconds and will dispatch law enforcement.

Regular Testing Insures Reliability

An alarm system is only as good as the routine procedure to test it with the Central Station Monitoring Facility (CSMF). Routine testing can turn up little problems that

New Video and Package Rates

Effective February 1, 2009

Package	Current Rate	Feb 1, 2009 Rate
SilverView	\$46.00	\$53.99 plus \$1.99 for Local Stations
SilverView (No Telephone Service)	—	Contact your office for pricing.
SilverView with DSL	\$62.99	\$70.99 plus \$1.99 for Local Stations
SilverView with DSL (No Telephone Service)	—	Contact your office for pricing.
Silver Total (Telephone, Video & DSL)*	\$92.49	\$92.99* plus \$1.99 for Local Stations
Silver Business Total*	\$97.94	\$97.99* plus \$1.99 for Local Stations
GoldView	\$55.00	\$62.99 plus \$1.99 for Local Stations
GoldView (No Telephone Service)	—	Contact your office for pricing.
GoldView with DSL	\$72.99	\$80.99 plus \$1.99 for Local Stations
GoldView with DSL (No Telephone Service)	—	Contact your office for pricing.
Gold Total (Telephone, Video & DSL)*	\$102.49	\$102.99* plus \$1.99 for Local Stations
Gold Business Total*	\$107.94	\$107.99* plus \$1.99 for Local Stations

*Governing agency fees (Interstate Access \$6.50 & Intrastate Access \$1.55) previously included in Total Packages will be billed in addition to the package price. Other fees, such as FUSC, SUSC, Copyright Fees, and 911 fees may apply.

problems that can become big ones.

To test a burglar alarm system, simply call the CSMF, give them your account number with the password, and tell them you would like to perform a test. Then arm the system and

Continued on back page.

Infrastructure Expansion Recap[†]

JAN 2007

Gold Video includes 95 channels and Silver Video includes 63 channels.

AUG 2007

Massive flooding in area exchanges causes widespread damage to homes, businesses, and telephone equipment.

FALL 2007

The Big 10 network is added to both channel line-ups with still no increase in cost to the customer.

JAN 2008

Lifetime is added to the Silver channel line-up. No extra charge.

JUN 2008

Massive flooding in area exchanges again causes widespread damage including severe damage to the LaValle Telephone office forcing them to temporarily relocate.

SUMMER 2008

Testing for High Definition Television begins with 8 channels.

Average programming fees now \$14.00 more than 2003.

Gold Total Package is \$102.49 (RGTC) & \$102.99 (LaValle) and offers 97 channels. Silver Total Package is \$92.49 (RGTC) & \$92.99 (LaValle) and offers 63 channels

RCA set-top boxes are changed out to be ready for the transition to all digital broadcasts.

DEC 2008

JAN 2009

truTV is added to both channel packages. ESPN is added to Gold; Bravo and E! Entertainment are added to Silver.

Local networks (NBC, ABC, Fox, & CBS) begin contract restrictions and demand monthly programming fees.



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walk through rooms equipped with motion detectors to set off the system. After your movement trips the system, call the CSMF to confirm that they received the signal. If the CSMF doesn't seem to be receiving your signal, call us to arrange a service call.

Manufacturers suggest that you test alarm systems weekly or no less than once a month. If you are going away for several days, it makes sense to test the system before you leave.

If you are a CSM customer and have questions about the testing procedure, we will furnish you with the necessary contact information. Please contact us for more details.

2008-2009 Men's Big 10 Basketball Schedule: Conference Games

Wed., Dec. 31	3:00pm Iowa at Ohio St 5:00pm Michigan St at Minnesota	Sat., Jan. 17	5:00pm Penn St at Indiana 7:00pm Ohio St at Michigan
Sat., Jan. 3	11:00am Ohio St at Minnesota 1:00pm Penn St at Wisconsin 3:30pm Indiana at Iowa 6:00pm Michigan St at Northwestern	Sun., Jan. 18	11:00am Iowa at Purdue 1:00pm Minnesota at Northwestern
Sun., Jan. 4	11:00am Illinois at Michigan	Tue., Jan. 20	8:00pm Michigan at Penn St
Tue., Jan. 6	8:00pm Purdue at Penn St	Wed., Jan. 21	5:30pm Northwestern at Michigan St 7:30pm Wisconsin at Iowa
Wed., Jan. 7	5:30pm Michigan at Indiana 7:30pm Northwestern at Wisconsin	Sat., Jan. 24	5:00pm Iowa at Penn St 7:00pm Northwestern at Michigan
Fri., Jan. 9	6:00pm Houston Baptist at Ohio St	Sun., Jan. 25	11:00am Minnesota at Indiana
Sat., Jan. 10	2:00pm Indiana at Illinois	Wed., Jan. 28	5:30pm Michigan at Ohio St 8:30pm Indiana at Northwestern
Sun., Jan. 11	TBD Iowa at Michigan TBD Penn St at Minnesota	Thu., Jan. 29	8:00pm Illinois at Minnesota
Wed., Jan. 14	5:30pm Michigan St at Penn St 7:30pm Michigan at Illinois	Sat., Jan. 31	7:00pm Wisconsin at Northwestern
Thu., Jan. 15	8:00pm Minnesota at Wisconsin		