



Bell Ringer

Volume 58, No 9 January 2025
Clear Lake, South Dakota 57226

FIBER-FAST INTERNET IN THE NEW YEAR

As the new year rolls in, many of us welcome a range of new gadgets into our homes—smart TVs, gaming consoles, smartphones, smart thermostats, or security cameras. While these devices add convenience and entertainment, they can also strain your Internet connection. Here’s how to ensure your Internet speed is up to par for a seamless experience.

Understand Your Internet Needs

The first step to ensuring a smooth Internet experience is knowing how much speed your household requires. If you added more devices in your house, pay attention to whether your Internet is acting slower than usual. If multiple devices are used simultaneously, you might need to invest in a faster speed.

Upgrade Your Router

Your Internet speed is only as good as your router. Older routers may not support the speeds provided by modern Internet plans. If you own your router and notice that you aren’t getting the speeds you’re paying for, it might be time to get a new one. ITC offers leasing plans on routers. Leasing a router from ITC allows you the freedom of not worrying if your router is up-to-date.

Secure Your Network

With multiple devices connected, network security is more crucial than ever. First and foremost, make sure you create strong, unique passwords for all the new accounts you are logging into. Along with your devices, make sure your router is secured with a strong password.

Another way to ensure your network is secure is by using Blast Wi-Fi powered by ITC. Blast Wi-Fi provides an ITC leased router and an app that can help you manage your devices from your smartphone. You will be alerted when new devices are on your network, and you can also add restrictions for specific devices.

Your new devices deserve the best Internet experience. By optimizing your connection, upgrading equipment, and securing your network, you can start the new year with seamless connectivity and make the most of your technology. For more information, visit www.itc-web.com/blast-wi-fi or call ITC at 1.800.417.8667.



WHAT ARE DEEPFAKES?

By Michael Martinell, Network Broadband Technician



This photo is created from AI and could be turned into a Deepfake video of Abraham Lincoln.

Have you seen funny videos of Abraham Lincoln smiling or George Washington dancing? Or childhood photos appearing to sing popular songs? This fun technology brings history and people to life in surprising ways. But there's another side to it. Instead of someone like Abraham Lincoln, imagine a video of a celebrity endorsing a product—or worse, someone you know asking for money. The video looks real, but is it? What if a machine made it entirely, and the person in the video had no idea?

This is the world of deepfakes, a technology powered by artificial intelligence (AI) that creates fake videos, audio, or images so convincing they can fool even sharp eyes. While deepfakes can be used creatively for entertainment or satire, they also pose significant risks.

Deepfakes can spread misinformation, impersonate people for scams, or damage reputations. A public figure might be shown saying something they never said, influencing opinions or a video of a friend could be faked to trick someone into giving away money. As the technology improves, the consequences grow more serious.

So, how can you spot a deepfake? There are clues if you know what to look for. Often, deepfake videos have glitches—like unnatural facial movements, eyes that don't blink as they should, or lighting that looks off. Audio might also seem strange, with robotic tones or mismatched lip-syncing. It's about noticing the small details that feel wrong.

To protect yourself, start with skepticism. If you see a video or recording that seems odd or makes an urgent request—like asking for money or sensitive information—pause and verify before reacting. Reach out to the person through another method, like calling. For public figures, check reliable news sources to confirm the story.

As deepfake technology evolves, so do tools to fight it. Social media platforms are introducing systems to detect fakes, and experts are working on solutions to make the Internet safer. Staying informed and cautious helps protect us and others from falling victim to these tricks.

Deepfakes might be clever, but with awareness, we can stay ahead. Let's continue exploring this technology together! Awareness is key to keeping us safe in this ever-changing digital world.

If you are ever questioning something that you receive, it is best not to click on it or follow the directions it gives you. If you have any questions, please contact ITC at 1.800.417.8667 or the ITC helpdesk at 1.888.217.5718.

FARM SHOW TIME

By Holly Stormo, Marketing Communications Specialist

It's time for farm show season! ITC will attend shows in Webster and Watertown this year.

The Webster Area Farm and Home Show will occur on January 24 - 25 at the Webster Armory. The Watertown Winter Farm Show is from February 12 - 15 at the Watertown Extension Center. These shows are a good opportunity for ITC staff to meet and greet our members in person. It is also the perfect place to ask questions you might have about your Cooperative.

Please stop by, check us out, and say hello!

QUICK DIAL NUMBERS

The following is a list of phone numbers to use when you need help or to get more information. Keep them handy!

- **Dial 4-1-1:** for directory assistance for any number in the United States. It's a good way to get local, national, and 800 numbers. Note: Charges may apply.
- **Dial 5-1-1:** for up-to-date, location-specific, road and weather information on any Interstate, US or state highway in MN, SD, and several adjoining states.
- **Dial 6-1-1:** for ITC customers to call for new installs, service repairs, disconnects, reconnects, moves, changes, and general information. This call is toll-free from ITC telephone exchanges.
- **Dial 7-1-1:** for users who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired so they can have their calls connected using a TTY to a standard phone. Then the operator relays the conversation for the two callers.
- **Dial 8-1-1:** for the National Call Before You Dig number. This number is used to locate underground facilities such as pipelines, telephone wires, or gas lines prior to digging.
- **Dial 9-1-1:** for emergencies. This number is available to everyone with a working telephone, cell phone, or pay phone.
- **Dial 9-8-8:** for the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. This number is to help you through life's challenges, whether you're facing some struggles or need someone to talk to. There are counselors ready to talk to you.

Have a safe and happy

